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Reader in Philosophy, University of Cambridge

QUENTIN SKINNER

Regius Professor of Modern History in the University of Cambridge

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DANTE

Monarchy

TRANSLATED AND EDITED BY

PRUE SHAW

*Senior Lecturer in the Italian Department
University College London*

 CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

1996

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Monarchy

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Principal events in Dante's life

- 1250 Death of Emperor Frederick II; for 60 years there will be no crowned Holy Roman Emperor, and there will be no effective incumbent in Dante's lifetime.
- 1265 Dante is born in Florence.
- c.* 1283 → Dante establishes himself as a leading love poet in Florence.
- 1289 Battle of Campaldino, in which Dante serves with the Florentine Guelf forces against the Ghibelline city of Arezzo.
- c.* 1292 Dante assembles an anthology of his poems with linking narrative to form the *Vita nuova*.
- c.* 1293 → Dante embarks on the study of philosophy; he goes on to write poems on philosophical themes.
- 1294 Boniface VIII becomes Pope.
- 1295 Dante enters political life in the commune of Florence, having enrolled in the guild of physicians and apothecaries; in the following years he serves on several councils; the Guelfs split into two factions, which will become known as Blacks and Whites.

Principal events

- 1300 15 June – 15 August: Dante serves as one of the six priors who exercise executive power under the Gonfaloniere di Giustizia.
- 1300 Easter: the fictional date of Dante's journey to the realms of the afterlife as it will be described in the *Comedy*.
- 1301 October: Dante is absent from Florence when the Black Guelphs, whose leaders had recently been exiled, stage a coup and return to power (he is probably on a mission representing the commune at the papal curia in Rome).
- 1302 27 January: in his absence Dante is fined, excluded from public office and banished from Tuscany on a fabricated charge of corruption.
- 10 March: the sentence is confirmed; if Dante falls into the commune's power he will be burnt at the stake.
- ✓ December: Boniface proclaims the supreme authority of the church in temporal affairs in the bull *Unam sanctam*.
- 1303 October: Death of Boniface.
- Election of Benedict XI, who dies the following year.
- 1304 Dante becomes a 'party on his own', abandoning his allegiance to his fellow White Guelph exiles; in the following years, he travels extensively all over Italy.
- c. 1304–c. 1308 Dante writes the *De vulgari eloquentia* and the *Convivio*, which is to provide an extensive prose commentary on his philosophical poems (both works remain unfinished); in *Convivio* IV, iii–vi, he sets out a first version of some of the arguments he will use in the *Monarchy*.
- 1305 Election of Pope Clement V, a Frenchman who never comes to Rome; the Papacy is subsequently established in Avignon.
- 1308 Henry of Luxembourg is chosen by the imperial Electors, and has Clement's backing.
- c. 1308 Dante starts the *Comedy*, which he works on until shortly before his death.

Principal events

- 1309 January: Henry is crowned as Emperor Henry VII at Aix-la-Chapelle.
- 1310 October: Henry VII embarks on his Italian campaign. Dante writes an open letter in Latin to the rulers and people of Italy, urging them to welcome the emperor, who will bring peace and justice.
- 1311 January: Henry VII is crowned in Milan.
- 31 March: Dante writes to the Florentines, urging them to recognize Henry.
- 17 April: Dante writes to the Emperor, urging him to act against Florence, 'the viper that turns against the vitals of her mother'.
- 1312 June: Henry VII is crowned in Rome, but (because of Papal opposition) not in St Peter's.
- 1313 April: Henry declares all men subject to the Emperor's authority.
- ✓ June: Clement's bull *Pastoralis cura* rejects imperial claims to overlordship.
- August: Henry VII dies; the imperial Electors fail to reach agreement on a successor.
- 1314 At the very earliest and possibly much later, Dante writes the *Monarchy*.
- 1315 June: an amnesty is offered to the Florentine exiles, provided they acknowledge their guilt; Dante rejects the offer.
- October: Dante's exile from Florence is reconfirmed for life and is now extended to his children (his punishment if captured will be decapitation); his later years are spent at Verona at the court of Can Grande della Scala and at Ravenna at the court of Guido Novello da Polenta.
- c. 1320 Dante writes the *Questio* and the *Egloge*.
- 1321 Dante dies at Ravenna.
- c. 1327 Guido Vernani writes the *De reprobatione Monarchiae*.

Principal events

- 1329 According to Boccaccio, the *Monarchy* is publicly burnt as a heretical text in Bologna, but a plan to burn Dante's bones with his treatise is foiled.
- 1554 The *Monarchy* is placed on the Vatican's Index of prohibited books, from which it is removed only in 1881.
- 1559 The *editio princeps* is published in Basle.

Bibliographical note

The two most commonly cited editions of the Latin text of Dante's treatise are those of Rostagno and Ricci: Dante Alighieri, *Monarchia*, a cura di E. Rostagno, in *Le Opere di Dante*. Testo critico della Società Dantesca Italiana, Firenze 1921, second edn 1960; and Dante Alighieri, *Monarchia*, a cura di P. G. Ricci (Edizione Nazionale delle opere di Dante Alighieri a cura della Società Dantesca Italiana, vol. v), Milano 1965. There are significant differences between the two, Ricci's text representing an improvement on Rostagno's in a score of places. (A new critical edition of the Latin text by the translator and editor of this volume is at an advanced stage of preparation.) The English versions of the *Monarchy* most widely quoted are those of Wicksteed and Nicholl: P. H. Wicksteed, *The De Monarchia*, Hull 1896 (subsequently reprinted in the Temple Classics series); and Dante, *Monarchy and Three Political Letters*, with an introduction by Donald Nicholl, London 1954. The second represents a notable improvement on the first in terms of readability, but is not without inaccuracies, omissions and (inevitably, given that it is based on Rostagno's Latin text) renderings which do not correspond to an up-to-date Latin text. Dante's *Convivio*, which in its fourth book rehearses some of the arguments on empire that Dante will develop in the *Monarchy*, is now available in a good new English version: Dante, *The Banquet*, translated by C. Ryan, Saratoga, California, 1989.

Excellent brief accounts of Dante's life, including his political career up to the time of his exile, are to be found in G. Padoan, *Introduzione a Dante*, Firenze 1975; R. Migliorini Fissi, *Dante*, Fir-

Book One

i

For all men whom the Higher Nature¹ has endowed with a love of truth, this above all seems to be a matter of concern, that just as they have been enriched by the efforts of their forebears, so they too may work for future generations, in order that posterity may be enriched by their efforts. For the man who is steeped in the teachings which form our common heritage, yet has no interest in contributing something to the community, is failing in his duty: let him be in no doubt of that; for he is not 'a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in due season',² but rather a destructive whirlpool which forever swallows things down and never gives back what it has swallowed. Thinking often about these things, lest some day I be accused of burying my talent,³ I wish not just to put forth buds but to bear fruit for the benefit of all, and to reveal truths that have not been attempted by others.⁴ For what fruit would a man bear who proved once again a theorem of Euclid's? or who sought to show once again the nature of happi-

¹ i.e. God. The phrase is best glossed by *Mon.* II, II, 2: 'nature in the mind of the first mover, who is God'. Man's love of truth is the mark of his divine origin, for it is God who has 'stamped' or 'imprinted' [*impressit*] him with the desire for knowledge (see Introduction p. xv-xvi). The wax-and-seal metaphor for creation implicit in the verb will become explicit at II, II, 8 (see n. 8).

² Psalms I, 3.

³ The parable of the buried talent is in Matthew 25, 14-30.

⁴ Dante's originality lies not in his choice of subject, much debated in the thirteenth and early fourteenth century, but in his attempting to ground the discussion on philosophical first principles and in the conclusions to which this leads. ✓

wax
& seal

ness, which has already been shown by Aristotle? or who took up the defence of old age which has already been defended by Cicero? None at all; indeed the tiresome pointlessness of the exercise would arouse distaste.

- 5 Now since among other truths which are hidden and useful, a knowledge of temporal monarchy is both extremely useful and most inaccessible, and since no one has attempted to elucidate it (on account of its not leading directly to material gain), I propose to draw it forth from where it lies hidden, so that my wakeful nights may be of benefit to the world, and so that I may be the first to win for my own glory the honour of so great a prize.⁵ It is indeed an arduous task, and one beyond my strength, that I embark on, trusting not so much in my own powers as in the light of that Giver who 'giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not'.⁶

ii

- Firstly therefore we must see what is meant by 'temporal monarchy', in broad terms and as it is generally understood. Temporal monarchy, then, which men call 'empire', is a single sovereign authority set over all others in time, that is to say over all authorities which operate in those things and over those things which are measured by time.¹ Now there are three main points of inquiry which have given rise to perplexity on this subject: first, is it necessary to the well-being of the world? second, did the Roman people take on the office of the monarch by right? and third, does the monarch's authority derive directly from God or from someone else (his minister or vicar)?

- 4 Now since every truth which is not itself a first principle must be demonstrated with reference to the truth of some first principle, it is necessary in any inquiry to know the first principle to which

⁵ Cf. 1 Corinthians 9, 24.

⁶ James 1, 5.

¹ The definition has two key elements: temporal monarchy is one and indivisible [*unicus*]; and it is set over all other forms of temporal (i.e. secular) authority [*super omnes (sc. principatus) in tempore*], secular authority being distinguished from spiritual authority precisely by its relationship to 'things measured by time' as distinct from the eternal things of the spirit which are outside time. Cf. III, x. 10; 'empire is a jurisdiction which embraces within its scope every other temporal jurisdiction'.

we refer back in the course of strict deductive argument in order to ascertain the truth of all the propositions which are advanced later. And since this present treatise is a kind of inquiry, we must at the outset investigate the principle whose truth provides a firm foundation for later propositions. For it must be noted that there are certain things (such as mathematics, the sciences and divinity²) which are outside human control, and about which we can only theorize, but which we cannot affect by our actions; and then there are certain things which are within our control, where we can not only theorize but also act, and in these action is not for the sake of theory, but theorizing is for the sake of taking action, since in these the objective is to take action. Now since our present subject is political, indeed is the source and starting-point of just forms of government, and everything in the political sphere comes under human control, it is clear that the present subject is not directed primarily towards theoretical understanding but towards action. Again, since in actions it is the final objective³ which sets in motion and causes everything – for that is what first moves a person who acts – it follows that the whole basis of the means for attaining an end is derived from the end itself. For there will be one way of cutting wood to build a house, and another to build a ship. Therefore whatever constitutes the purpose of the whole of human society (if there is such a purpose) will be here the first principle, in terms of which all subsequent propositions to be proved will be demonstrated with sufficient rigour; for it would be foolish to suppose that there is one purpose for this society and another for that, and not a common purpose for all of them.

iii

We must therefore now see what is the purpose of human society as a whole; when we have seen this, more than half our work will

² The distinction between the theoretical and practical sciences is Aristotelian, as are the three areas of theoretical enquiry here mentioned (for Dante as for Aristotle *physica* [the natural sciences] embraced all aspects of the study of the natural world, including biology, astronomy, meteorology, chemistry and physics); see J. Barnes, *Aristotle*, Oxford 1982, ch. 6: 'The structure of the sciences', pp. 23–7 and ch. 18: 'Practical philosophy', pp. 77–83.

³ Final objective, goal, purpose, end [*ultimus finis*] is one of four kinds of cause distinguished by Aristotle, the others being material, formal and efficient. Brief

2 be done, as Aristotle says in the *Ethics*.¹ And to throw light on the matter we are inquiring into, it should be borne in mind that, just as there is a particular purpose for which nature produces the thumb, and a different one for which she produces the whole hand, and again a purpose different from both of these for which she produces the arm, and a purpose different from all of these for which she produces the whole person; in the same way there is one purpose for which the individual person is designed, another for the household, another for the small community, yet another for the city, and another for the kingdom; and finally the best purpose of all is the one for which God Everlasting with his art, which is nature, brings into being the whole of mankind. And it is this purpose we are seeking here as the guiding principle in our inquiry.

3 Consequently the first point to bear in mind is that God and nature do nothing in vain;² on the contrary whatever they bring into being is designed for a purpose. For in the intention of its creator *qua* creator the essential nature of any created being is not an ultimate end in itself; the end is rather the activity which is proper to that nature; and so it is that the activity does not exist for the sake of the essential nature, but the essential nature for the sake of that

4 activity. There is therefore some activity specific to humanity as a whole, for which the whole human race in all its vast number of individual human beings is designed; and no single person, or household, or small community, or city, or individual kingdom can fully achieve it. Now what this activity is will become clear when once we clarify what is the highest potentiality of the whole of

5 mankind. I say therefore that no faculty shared by many different species is the highest potentiality of any one of them; because, since it is precisely that highest potentiality which is the defining characteristic of the species, it would follow that one and the same essential nature was specific to several species; and this is impossible. So

6 the highest faculty in a human being is not simply to exist, because the elements too share in the simple fact of existence; nor is it to

definitions of all four are to be found in Peter of Spain, *Tractatus called afterwards Summule Logicales* (henceforth *Summule*), ed. L. M. De Rijk, Assen 1972, pp. 67–69; and see P. Boyde, *Dante Philomythes and Philosopher. Man in the Cosmos*, Cambridge 1981, ch. 1: 'Wonder and knowledge', esp. pp. 51–4.

¹ *Ethics* I, 7 1098b 6–7.

² This fundamental Aristotelian principle is the basis of the argument which follows in this chapter. On God and nature see also *Mon.* II, ii, 2–3.

exist in compound form, for that is found in minerals; nor is it to exist as a living thing, for plants too share in that; nor is it to exist as a creature with sense perception, for that is also shared by the lower animals; but it is to exist as a creature who apprehends by means of the potential intellect;³ this mode of existence belongs to no creature (whether higher or lower) other than human beings. For while there are indeed other beings⁴ who like us are endowed 7 with intellect, nonetheless their intellect is not 'potential' in the way that man's is, since such beings exist only as intelligences and nothing else, and their very being is simply the act of understanding that their own nature exists; and they are engaged in this ceaselessly, otherwise they would not be eternal. It is thus clear that the highest potentiality of mankind is his intellectual potentiality or faculty. And since that potentiality cannot be fully actualized all at once in 8 any one individual or in any one of the particular social groupings enumerated above, there must needs be a vast number of individual people in the human race, through whom the whole of this potentiality can be actualized; just as there must be a great variety of things which can be generated so that the whole potentiality of prime matter can continuously be actualized; otherwise one would be postulating a potentiality existing separately from actualization, which is impossible.⁵ And Averroes is in agreement with this opi- 9 nion in his commentary on the *De anima*.⁶ Now the intellectual potentiality of which I am speaking is not only concerned with universal ideas or classes, but also (by extension as it were) with particulars; and so it is often said that the theoretical intellect by exten-

³ Man's uniqueness resides in the duality of mind and body; because of this duality his intellect (unlike that of angels) exists as a potentiality and not as something which is always fully activated or operational, hence it is described as 'potential' or 'possible'. Dante's view of humanity's place in the scale of creation is that of an educated man of his time; see Boyde, *Dante Philomythes*, ch. 5: 'The natural world and the Scale of Being', esp. pp. 123–31; on the activity characteristic of a given nature [*propria operatio*] see Boyde, *Perception and Passion*, pp. 37–40.

⁴ i.e. the celestial intelligences or angels, who are pure disembodied intellect. See Boyde, *Dante Philomythes*, ch. 7: 'The angels', esp. pp. 186–98.

⁵ On potentiality and actuality in the created world, and on becoming and being, see Boyde, *Dante Philomythes*, pp. 60–2; and Barnes, pp. 46–51.

⁶ Averroes, *De anima* III. Averroes (1126–98) is the great Moslem commentator on Aristotle with whose view on the 'possible' intellect Dante elsewhere took issue; see C. Vasoli, *Averroès*, in *ED* I, pp. 473–81, and *intelletto possibile*, in *ED* III, pp. 469–72; *Dict.*, pp. 75–6; Boyde, *Dante Philomythes*, pp. 276–8: 'The intellect and the error of Averroes'.

10 sion becomes practical,⁷ its goal then being *doing* and *making*.⁸ I am referring to actions, which are regulated by political judgment, and to products, which are shaped by practical skill; all of these are subordinate to thinking as the best activity for which the Primal Goodness brought mankind into existence. This sheds light on that statement in the *Politics* that 'men of vigorous intellect naturally rule over others'.⁹

iv

Now it has been sufficiently explained that the activity proper to mankind considered as a whole is constantly to actualize the full intellectual potential of humanity, primarily through thought and secondarily through action (as a function and extension of thought).
2 And since what holds true for the part is true for the whole, and an individual human being 'grows perfect in judgment and wisdom when he sits at rest',¹ it is apparent that mankind most freely and readily attends to this activity – an activity which is almost divine, as we read in the psalm: 'Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels'² – in the calm or tranquillity of peace. Hence it is clear that universal peace is the best of those things which are ordained
3 for our human happiness. That is why the message which rang out from on high to the shepherds was not wealth, nor pleasures, nor honours, not long life, nor health, nor strength, nor beauty, but peace; for the heavenly host said: 'Glory to God on high, and on

⁷ On the relationship between theoretical and practical intellect, see *Mon.* I, xiv, 7; and see Boyde, *Perception and Passion*, esp. pp. 177–85.

⁸ 'Doing' and 'making' are the two modes of operation of the practical intellect (see Barnes, p. 27); these activities are controlled and directed respectively by wisdom in its two practical manifestations as judgment [*prudentia politica*] (see Antony Black, *Political Thought in Europe 1250–1450*, Cambridge 1992, p. 158) and skill or expertise [*ars*].

⁹ Aristotle nowhere says exactly this, but cf. *Politics* I, 2 1252a 31. Opinion is divided on whether Dante had a first-hand knowledge of the *Politics*, see A. H. Gilbert, 'Had Dante read the *Politics* of Aristotle?' in *PMLA*, XLIII 1928, pp. 602–13; L. Minio-Paluello, 'Dante's Reading of Aristotle', in *The World of Dante. Essays on Dante and his Times*, edited by C. Grayson, Oxford 1980, pp. 61–80; and E. Berti, *Politica*, in *ED* IV, pp. 585–7.

¹ The connection between the contemplative life and wisdom is a medieval commonplace (cf. Ecclesiasticus 38, 25; Aristotle, *Physics* 7, 3, 247b 10–11).

² Psalms 8, 6 (AV 8, 5).

earth peace to men of good will.³ And that is why the Saviour of 4 men used the greeting 'Peace be with you',⁴ for it was fitting that the supreme Saviour should utter the supreme salutation; and his disciples and Paul chose to preserve this custom in their own greetings, as everybody can verify. From the arguments developed so 5 far, it is clear what is the better, indeed the best, way of enabling mankind to engage in the activity proper to humanity; and consequently we see the most direct means of achieving the goal to which all our human actions are directed as to their final end. That means is universal peace, which is to be taken as the first principle for the arguments which follow. As we said, it was necessary to have such 6 a principle to serve as an agreed point of reference to which anything which had to be proved might be referred back, as to a self-evident truth.

v

Returning then to the point made at the beginning,¹ there are three main points of inquiry concerning temporal monarchy (or 'empire' as it is more commonly called) which have given rise to and continue to give rise to perplexity; and as we have already said, it is our intention to investigate these questions in the order in which we set them out and taking the principle we have just established as our starting-point. So the first question is this: is temporal monarchy necessary for the well-being of the world? That it is necessary can be shown with powerful and persuasive arguments, and neither reason nor authority provides any strong counter-argument. The first of these arguments may be taken from the authority of Aristotle in his *Politics*.² Now this revered authority states in that work that 3 when a number of things are ordered to a single end, one of them must guide or direct, and the others be guided or directed; and it is not only the author's illustrious name which requires us to believe

³ Luke 2, 14.

⁴ Luke 24, 36; John 20, 21; cf. also Matthew 10, 12.

¹ Having established his fundamental principles (what mankind's purpose is and the means of achieving that purpose) Dante now returns to the three questions formulated in I, ii.

² *Politics* I, 5.

4 this, but inductive reasoning as well. For if we consider a single person, we shall see that what happens in the individual is this: while all the faculties are directed towards happiness, it is the intellectual faculty which guides and directs all the others; otherwise
 5 happiness is unattainable. If we consider a household, whose purpose is to prepare its members to live the good life, there must be one person who guides and directs, who is called the 'pater familias' or his representative, in line with Aristotle's observation that 'Every household is governed by the eldest';³ and his role, as Homer says, is to guide everyone and impose rules on the others. Hence the
 6 proverbial curse: 'May you have an equal in your house.' If we consider a small community, whose purpose is neighbourly support in relation both to people and to goods, there must be one person who guides the others, either appointed by someone from outside or emerging as leader from among their number with the agreement of the others; otherwise not only will they fail to achieve that neighbourly collaboration, but sometimes, if a number of people contest
 7 the leadership, the whole community is destroyed. If we consider a city, whose purpose is to be self-sufficient in living the good life,⁴ there must be one ruling body, and this is so not only in just government, but in perverted forms of government as well; if this should not be the case, not only is the purpose of social life
 8 thwarted, but the city itself ceases to be what it was. Lastly, if we consider an individual kingdom – and the purpose of a kingdom is the same as that of a city, but with greater confidence that peace can be maintained – there must be one king who rules and governs; otherwise not only do those who live in the kingdom not achieve that purpose, but the kingdom itself falls to ruin, in accordance with those words of the infallible Truth: 'Every kingdom divided

³ This line from the *Odyssey* (IX, 114) is quoted in *Politics* I, 2 1252b 20. Dante had no direct knowledge of Homer (see P. Toynbee, *Dante Studies and Researches*, London 1902, pp. 204–15).

⁴ This definition is Aristotelian, see *Politics* 3, 9 1280b 29–34. To live the 'good life' is to live as a human being in the fullest sense, to live the life of a rational creature who applies reason to making discriminations of right and wrong, good and evil; a community achieves the 'good life' when it provides the conditions which enable its citizens to fulfil themselves in this way; see Barnes, pp. 77–83. Dante's review of social groupings of increasing size, from family to state, echoes Aristotle, *Politics* I, 2, although for Aristotle the city-state was the largest such entity; Dante adds 'kingdom' to the list.

against itself shall be laid waste.'⁵ If this holds true in these cases 9 and in individuals who are ordered to one particular goal, then the proposition advanced above is true;⁶ now it is agreed that the whole of mankind is ordered to one goal, as has already been demonstrated:⁷ there must therefore be one person who directs and rules mankind, and he is properly called 'Monarch' or 'Emperor'. And 10 thus it is apparent that the well-being of the world requires that there be a monarchy or empire.

vi

And as a part stands in relation to the whole, so the order in a part stands to the order in the whole. A part stands in relation to the whole as to its end and perfection: therefore the order in a part stands to the order in the whole as to its end and perfection. From this it can be deduced that the goodness of the order in a part does not exceed the goodness of the order in the whole, but rather the reverse. Now since there are two kinds of order observable in 2 things, i.e. the order which relates part to part, and the order which relates the parts to some other entity which is not a part (thus the component parts of an army are interrelated one to another, and they are related to their commander¹), the order of the parts in relation to that single entity is better, for it constitutes the end or purpose of their interrelationship; their interrelationship exists for the sake of their relationship to the single entity, and not vice versa. So if this second kind of order is discernible in the constituent parts 3 which make up the human race, then with all the more reason must it be observable (by the force of our earlier syllogism²) in the human race considered as a whole or totality, given that it is a better order

⁵ Matthew 12, 25; Luke 11, 17.

⁶ The proposition advanced in par. 3 is supported by the evidence surveyed in pars. 4–8; it thus has the backing not only of Aristotle's authority but also of inductive reasoning working on the observable facts.

⁷ In chapter iii.

¹ The example of the army and its commander was a common one. Dante elsewhere used the example of the crew of a ship to make the same point about parts in relation to a whole. Both examples ultimately derive from Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 12, 10 and *Politics* 3, 4.

² The syllogism is that characteristic form of argument in Aristotelian logic which allows valid deductive inference, see I, xi, n. 2. The syllogism here referred to is the one enunciated in the first paragraph of this chapter.

or kind of order; but it is found in all the parts which make up the human race, as is quite clear from what was said in the previous chapter:³ therefore it must be observable in the totality.⁴ And thus all the parts we have enumerated which are lower than kingdoms, and those kingdoms themselves, must be ordered to one ruler or one rule, that is to a monarch or monarchy.

vii

Furthermore, the human race constitutes a whole in relation to its constituent parts, and is itself a part in relation to a whole. It is a whole in relation to individual kingdoms and peoples, as has been shown above; and it is a part in relation to the whole universe. So much is self-evident. And just as the lesser parts which make up the human race are well adapted to it, so it too can be described as being well adapted to its whole; for its parts are well adapted to it in relation to a single principle, as can easily be deduced from what was said earlier: and so absolutely speaking it too is well adapted to the universe (or to its ruler, who is God and Monarch) in relation to a single principle, i.e. one ruler. And thus it follows that monarchy is necessary to the well-being of the world.

viii

And every thing is in a good (indeed, ideal) state which is in harmony with the intention of the first mover, who is God; and this is self-evident, except to those who deny that divine goodness attains the summit of perfection. It is God's intention that every created thing should show forth His likeness in so far as its own nature can receive it. For this reason it is said: 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness';¹ for although 'in our image' cannot be said of things lower than man, 'after our likeness' can be said of anything.²

³ i.e. in pars. 4-8 of ch. v.

⁴ The shaping principle reflected in the ordering or structuring of reality and the interrelatedness of part to part and of part to whole is one aspect of the universe's 'likeness' to God; cf. *Mon.* II, vi, 4 and I, viii, 2.

¹ Genesis 1, 26. Boyde, *Dante Philomythes*, pp. 224-9, gives an account of the universe as bearing God's 'likeness' or 'imprint'.

² The distinction turns on man's rationality, which includes memory, intelligence and will, attributes not shared by the lower orders of creation, which nonetheless reflect divine goodness in their order or structure.

since the whole universe is simply an imprint of divine goodness. So mankind is in a good (indeed, ideal) state when, to the extent that its nature allows, it resembles God. But mankind most closely resembles God when it is most a unity, since the true measure of unity is in him alone; and for this reason it is written: 'Hear, o Israel, the Lord thy God is one.'³ But mankind is most a unity when it is drawn together to form a single entity, and this can only come about when it is ruled as one whole by one ruler, as is self-evident. Therefore mankind is most like God when it is ruled by one ruler, and consequently is most in harmony with God's intention; and this is what it means to be in a good (indeed, ideal) state, as we established at the beginning of this chapter.

ix

Again, every son is in a good (indeed, ideal) state when he follows in the footsteps of a perfect father, insofar as his own nature allows. Mankind is the son of heaven, which is quite perfect in all its workings; for man and the sun generate man, as we read in the second book of the *Physics*.¹ Therefore mankind is in its ideal state when it follows the footsteps of heaven, insofar as its nature allows. And since the whole sphere of heaven is guided by a single movement (i.e. that of the *Primum Mobile*), and by a single source of motion (who is God), in all its own parts, movements and causes of movement, as human understanding perceives quite clearly through philosophical reasoning, then if our argument is sound,² mankind is in its ideal state when it is guided by a single ruler (as by a single source of motion) and in accordance with a single law (as by a single movement) in its own causes of movement and in its own movements.³ Hence it is clear that monarchy (or that undivided

³ Deuteronomy 6, 4 and Mark 12, 29.

¹ *Physics* 2, 2. Dante's views on human generation are those of his age and derive from Aristotle, as he here indicates. (The woman's contribution to fertility, in the form of the ovum, is a relatively recent discovery.) For a fuller account of Dante's understanding of the process of human conception, including the Christian notion of the soul infused into the body directly by God at a certain stage in foetal development, see Boyde, *Dante Philomythes*, ch. 11: 'The makings of a man', esp. pp. 249-50, 271-9.

² Literally, if our syllogism is valid; see I, xi, n. 2.

³ Dante sets up an exact analogy from macrocosm to microcosm along these lines: as God and the *Primum Mobile* are to the workings of the universe (the 'whole

rule which is called 'empire') is necessary to the well-being of the world. Boethius expressed this view when he sighed:

O happy race of men,
if only the love by which the heavens are ruled
might rule your minds.⁴

X

Now wherever there can be conflict there must be judgment to resolve it, otherwise there would be an imperfection without its proper corrective; and this is impossible, since God and nature never fail in their provision of what is necessary.¹ There is always the possibility of conflict between two rulers where one is not subject to the other's control; such conflict may come about either through their own fault or the fault of their subjects (the point is self-evident); therefore there must be judgment between them. And since neither can judge the other (since neither is under the other's control, and an equal has no power over an equal) there must be a third party of wider jurisdiction who rules over both of them by right. And this person will either be the monarch or not. If he is, then our point is proved; if he is not, he in his turn will have an equal who is outside the sphere of his jurisdiction, and then it will once again be necessary to have recourse to a third party. And so either this procedure will continue *ad infinitum*, which is not possible, or else we must come to a first and supreme judge, whose judgment resolves all disputes either directly or indirectly;² and this man will be the monarch or emperor. Thus monarchy is necessary to the world. And Aristotle saw the force of this argument when

sphere of heaven' [*celum totum*] is the whole of the created world contained within the sphere of the Primum Mobile according to Ptolemaic astronomy), so the monarch and the law should be to the workings of human society, being respectively the source of action and the mechanism by which action is regulated. A lucid and informative account of Dante's cosmology which links it to notions of cause and purpose in ways which throw light on this passage is to be found in Boyde, *Dante Philomythes*, ch. 6: 'Concerning the heavens', esp. pp. 132-43; see also C. S. Lewis, *The Discarded Image*, Cambridge 1964, ch. 5: 'The heavens', pp. 92-121.

⁴ *De consolazione philosophiae* II, metr. 8.
¹ A philosophical commonplace which is a corollary to the earlier 'God and nature do nothing in vain'.

² i.e. in practical terms either as a court of first appeal or on appeal from a lower court.

he said: 'Things do not wish to be badly ordered; a plurality of reigns is bad; therefore let there be one ruler.'³

xi

Furthermore, the world is ordered in the best possible way when justice is at its strongest in it. Thus Virgil, wishing to praise the age which seemed to be emerging in his day, sang in his *Eclogues*:

Now the Virgin returns, the reign of Saturn returns.¹

For 'the virgin' was their name for justice, whom they also called 'Astrea'; the 'reign of Saturn' was their name for the best of times, which they also called 'golden'. Justice is at its strongest only under a monarch; therefore for the best ordering of the world there must be a monarchy or empire. To clarify the minor premiss,² it must be understood that justice, considered in itself and in its own nature, is a kind of rectitude or rule³ which spurns deviation from the straight

³ *Metaphysics* 12, 10. Aristotle here cites Homer on Agamemnon (*Iliad* II, 204), although he is referring not to a worldly prince but to the unmoved mover.

¹ *Eclogue* IV, 6.

² The syllogism, as noted, is that form of argument which allows valid deductive inference in Aristotelian logic; it consists always of three statements: major premiss, minor premiss, conclusion. If the syllogism is valid, then once the major and minor premisses have been established, the conclusion follows with logical inevitability. The link between the premisses is established by the 'middle' term (cf. *Mon.* III, VII, 3) which they have in common; the minor premiss itself is the link between major premiss and conclusion. A syllogism will be invalid if certain logical errors are made (and Dante will expose the faulty reasoning in a series of invalid syllogisms used by his opponents in *Mon.* III, IV, 21-22; V, 3; VII, 3); it will be valid but untrue if either major or minor premiss is untrue (see *Mon.* III, V, 4-5). Dante characteristically argues by enunciating a syllogism which is logically valid (i.e. the conclusion follows from the premisses), then proving the major and minor premisses to establish that its content is true. There are three types (or figures) of syllogism, classified according to the position of the 'middle' term in the premisses (subject in one and predicate in the other; predicate in both; subject in both). Useful brief accounts of syllogistic argument are to be found in J. L. Ackrill, *Aristotle the Philosopher*, Oxford 1981, ch. 6: 'Logic', pp. 79-93; and R. Smith, 'Logic', in *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle*, ed. J. Barnes, Cambridge 1995, pp. 27-65.

³ Although Aristotle devotes a large section of the *Ethics* to justice, and uses geometrical notions of proportion to clarify it (cf. *Mon.* II, V, 1 on 'right' [*iust*]), he nowhere (I think) formulates a definition in these terms of 'straightness' (or 'rectilinearity') and 'deviation from the straight line'. It has been argued that this is not a definition but a simile used to underline the absolute quality of justice considered in the abstract.

path to either side; and thus it does not admit of a more and a less – just like whiteness considered in the abstract.⁴

- 4 There are forms of this kind, in fact, which are to be found in composites, but which in themselves consist of a simple and unchangeable essence, as the Master of the Six Principles⁵ rightly says. Such qualities are present to a greater or lesser degree depending on the subjects in which they are given concrete form, according as these subjects contain more or less of their opposites.
- 5 Therefore justice is at its strongest where there is least of what is opposed to justice both in the disposition and in the actions of an agent; and then truly it can be said of her, as Aristotle says, 'neither Hesperus nor Lucifer is so wondrous'. For she is then like Phoebe gazing across the heavens at her brother from the rosy flush of the clear morning sky, from a point on the horizon diametrically
- 6 opposite.⁶ As far as disposition is concerned, justice is sometimes impeded in the will; for where the will is not entirely free of all greed, even if justice is present, nonetheless it is not entirely present in the splendour of its purity; for the subject⁷ has something, however slight, which is in some way resistant to it; and this is why those who try to stir up a judge's emotions are rightly rebuffed.⁸

⁴ Concepts such as 'justice' and 'whiteness', considered in themselves (i.e. in the abstract), consist of a simple and unvarying essence; in practice such abstractions are observable in our world only in concrete 'subjects' (the individual who enacts justice, the thing which is white) and the nature of the subject in any given instance will determine how 'pure' or 'impure' they are, i.e. to what degree they are 'mixed' with or 'contaminated' by what is opposed to them. What is opposed to justice, Dante will now go on to explain, takes two forms: it may be in the disposition of the subject, i.e. in his will, which can be incapacitated by greed, which is self-serving (egotistical) and thus in conflict with justice itself which is altruistic [*ad alterum*], concerned with the welfare of others and the common good; or it may be in action, if the subject lacks the power to act in relation to what he perceives to be just and wishes to do.

⁵ The author of a Commentary on Aristotle's *Categories*, often wrongly identified with Gilbertus Porretanus or Gilbert de la Porrée, Bishop of Poitiers; see L. Minio Paluella, 'Magister Sex Principiorum', in *Studi medievali*, s. 3, vi (1965), pp. 123–51; and *ED* III, p. 767.

⁶ The quotation, from a lost tragedy of Euripides, is cited by Aristotle in *Ethics* 5, 1 1129b 28–9. Hesperus = the evening star, Lucifer = the morning star (i.e. the planet Venus in its two aspects); Phoebe = Diana, the moon; her brother = the sun; i.e. where justice shines in its full splendour it outshines even the brightest star or planet and is comparable to the full moon shining in the clear dawn sky.

⁷ i.e. the person who is enacting justice.

⁸ Such people obstruct justice by interfering with the judge's ability to function as he ought, which requires precisely that he be 'dispassionate', free of emotions [*passiones*].

As far as actions are concerned, justice is sometimes impeded with regard to power; for since justice is a virtue that operates in relation to other people,⁹ if someone does not have the power to give to each person what is his, how will he act in accordance with justice? From this it is clear that the more powerful a just man is, the more effectively will justice be brought about by his actions.

Building on this exposition we can argue as follows: justice is at its strongest in the world when it resides in a subject who has in the highest degree possible the will and the power to act; only the monarch is such a subject; therefore justice is at its strongest in the world when it is located in the monarch alone. This prosyllogism¹⁰ is of the second figure with intrinsic negation, and it takes this form: all B is A; only C is A; therefore only C is B. That is: all B is A; nothing except C is A; therefore nothing except C is B. And the first proposition¹¹ is established by the preceding exposition; the second is shown as follows, firstly in relation to volition, and then in relation to power. To clarify the first of these¹² it must be noted that the thing most contrary to justice is greed, as Aristotle states in the fifth book of the *Ethics*.¹³ When greed is entirely eliminated, nothing remains which is opposed to justice; hence Aristotle's opinion¹⁴ that those things which can be resolved by law should in no

⁹ i.e. it is not self-serving or egotistical, but directed towards one's fellow-man and the common good, cf. *Ethics* 5, 1 1129b 26–1130a 13.

¹⁰ A prosyllogism is a preparatory or subsidiary syllogism in the context of the argument developed in the chapter as a whole; here the prosyllogism is introduced to prove the minor premiss of the main syllogism. This prosyllogism is of type 2 (see n. 2 above: A is the predicate in both premisses), with an excluding or limiting (hence 'negative') minor premiss ('only the monarch', 'no one but the monarch' has the qualities referred to); this negative element is 'intrinsic', i.e. implicit in the definition of the word 'monarch'. (The reformulation of the prosyllogism with 'nothing except' in the place of 'only' serves to underline the negative element, which is a characteristic of second figure syllogisms.) The main syllogism is the one enunciated at the beginning of the chapter, whose major premiss is self-evidently true (and is incidentally illustrated by the Virgilian quotation), but whose minor premiss is by no means self-evident and must therefore be demonstrated, starting with a clarification of the meaning of the term 'justice', pars. 3–7.

¹¹ The 'first proposition' is the major premiss of the prosyllogism (demonstrated in pars. 5–7); the second is the minor premiss of the prosyllogism, which Dante now proceeds to prove.

¹² i.e. how justice relates to volition.

¹³ Dante's view of greed [*cupiditas*] draws on both Aristotle, *Ethics* 5, 1 1129a 32–b 10 and 2 1130a 16–32, and the Bible, 1 Timothy 6, 10 [*radix enim omnium malorum est cupiditas*]; cf. *Mon.* 1, xiii, 7: 'it is greed alone which perverts judgment and obstructs justice'.

¹⁴ *Rhetoric* 1, 1; the idea had become a commonplace.

way be left to the judge's discretion. And it is fear of greed which makes this necessary, for greed easily leads men's minds astray. But where there is nothing which can be coveted, it is impossible for greed to exist, for emotions cannot exist where their objects have
 12 been destroyed. But there is nothing the monarch *could* covet, for his jurisdiction is bounded only by the ocean;¹⁵ whereas this is not the case with other rulers, whose sovereignty extends only as far as the neighbouring kingdom, as is the case, for instance, with the kings of Castille and of Aragon.¹⁶ From this it follows that of all
 13 men the monarch can be the purest embodiment of justice. Moreover, just as greed, however slight, dulls the habit of justice in some way, so charity or rightly ordered love¹⁷ makes it sharper and brighter. So the man in whom rightly ordered love can be strongest is the one in whom justice can have its principal abode; the monarch is such a man; therefore justice is or can be at its strongest when
 14 he exists. That rightly ordered love does what has been stated can be deduced from this: greed, scorning the intrinsic nature of man, seeks other things; whereas love, scorning all other things, seeks God and man, and hence the true good of man. Since among the other goods available to man living in peace is supremely important (as we saw earlier), and justice principally and most effectively brings this about, love most of all will strengthen justice, and the
 15 stronger love is the more it will do so. And that the monarch more than all other men should feel rightly ordered love can be shown as follows: the closer any loved object is to the lover the more it is loved; but men are closer to the monarch than to other princes; therefore they are more loved by him, or ought to be. The first premiss is clear if we take into consideration the nature of agents and patients;¹⁸ the second becomes clear if we bear in mind this

¹⁵ i.e. his jurisdiction covers the whole of the inhabited land mass; no territory or person lies outside it. This appears to be a deliberate echo of *Aen.* 1, 286-7: *nascetur pulchra Troianus origine Caesar, / imperium Oceano, famam qui terminet astris* ('From this noble line shall be born the Trojan Caesar, who shall limit his empire with ocean, his glory with the stars').

¹⁶ A contemporary example of the conflict which arises between finite kingdoms when there is no superior and all-embracing power to act as a judge and resolve conflict.

¹⁷ Augustine in *De civitate Dei* 14, 7 points out that *amor* and *dilectio* (unlike *karitas*) are used with reference to both good and evil; Aquinas in *Summa theologiae*, 1a. 60, 1 makes the same point about *dilectio*. Hence Dante's need to specify 'rightly directed love' [*recta dilectio*].

¹⁸ In this context agent = the lover and patient = the loved one.

fact, that men are close to other rulers only as parts, but they are close to the monarch as a totality.¹⁹ Again, they are close to other
 16 rulers by virtue of the monarch, and not vice versa; and thus concern for all men's welfare is primarily and directly the monarch's concern; other rulers share in it through the monarch, since their concern derives from that higher concern of his. Besides, the more
 17 universal a cause is, the more truly it is a cause, because the lower is not a cause except by virtue of the higher, as is clear from the *De causis*;²⁰ and the more truly a cause is a cause, the more it loves
 18 its own effect, since this love follows from the cause as such. Therefore since the monarch is the most universal cause among mortals
 19 that men should live the good life (for other rulers are a cause only by virtue of him, as we have seen), it follows that the good of mankind is dear to him above all else. Who doubts that the monarch
 20 is most strongly disposed to the working of justice, except those who do not understand the meaning of the word, since, if he is monarch, he cannot have enemies? The minor premiss of the main syllogism has been sufficiently proved and the conclusion is certain, namely that the best ordering of the world requires the existence of a monarchy.

xii

Now the human race is in its ideal state when it is completely free. This will be clear if we clarify the principle of freedom. Therefore
 2 it must be borne in mind that the first principle of our freedom is free will,¹ which many people talk about but few understand. For they go so far as to say that free will is free judgment in matters of volition. And what they say is true, but they are very far from understanding what the words mean, just like our logicians who daily enunciate certain propositions by way of example in their discussions on logic, such as 'a triangle has three angles equal to two

¹⁹ The distinction made here is clarified by *Mon.* 1, xiv, 4-7.

²⁰ The anonymous *Liber de causis* (often wrongly attributed to Aristotle, though not by Dante) was the prime source of neo-platonic ideas on scholasticism, see *ED* II, pp. 327-9; *Dict.*, p. 159.

¹ On Dante's understanding of human freedom of the will, see Boyde, *Perception and Passion*, ch. 10 'Aspects of human freedom', pp. 193-214.

- 3 right angles'.² And therefore I say that judgment is the link between perception and appetition: for first a thing is perceived, then it is judged to be good or evil, and finally the person who
 4 judges pursues it or shuns it. Now if judgment controls desire completely and is in no way pre-empted by it, it is free; but if judgment is in any way at all pre-empted and thus controlled by desire, it cannot be free, because it does not act under its own power, but is dragged along in the power of something else.
 5 And that is why the lower animals cannot have free will, because their judgments are always pre-empted by desire. And from this it is also clear that non-material beings,³ whose wills are unchangeable, as well as human souls who leave this world of ours in a state of grace, do not lose free will on account of the fact that their wills are unchangeable; in fact they retain it in its most perfect and true form.
 6 When this has been grasped, it can also be seen that this freedom (or this principle of all our freedom) is the greatest gift given by God to human nature – as I have already said in the *Paradiso* of the *Comedy* ⁴– since by virtue of it we become happy here as men,
 7 by virtue of it we become happy elsewhere as gods. If this is the case, who will not agree that the human race is at its best when it is able to make fullest use of this principle? But living under a
 8 monarch it is supremely free. Thus it must be borne in mind that a thing is free which exists 'for its own sake and not for the sake of something else', as Aristotle states in the *Metaphysics*.⁵ For a thing which exists for the sake of something else is necessarily conditioned by that other for whose sake it exists, as a route is necessarily
 9 conditioned by its terminus. Mankind exists for its own sake and not for the sake of something else only when it is under the

² The implication is that such propositions are repeated mechanically, as in rote learning, with no real understanding. The example of the angles of a triangle is used repeatedly by Aristotle by way of illustration in the *Posterior Analytics* and the *Sophistical Refutations*.

³ i.e. angels.

⁴ Cf. *Paradiso* v, 19–24: Lo maggior don che Dio per sua larghezza / fesse creando . . . / fu della volontà la libertate; / di che le creature intelligenti, / e tutte e sole, fuoro e son dotate ('The greatest gift that God in his bounty bestowed in the act of creation . . . was freedom of the will, with which all intelligent beings, and they alone, were and are endowed.'). This cross-reference to the *Paradiso* is crucial for the dating of the *Monarchy* (see Introduction, p. xxxiii).

⁵ *Metaphysics* 1, 2 982b 25–6.

rule of a monarch, for only then are perverted forms of government (i.e. democracies, oligarchies and tyrannies⁶), which force mankind into slavery, set right – as is clear to anyone who examines them all; and only then do kings, aristocrats (known as the great and the good), and those zealous for the freedom of the people govern justly; for since the monarch loves men most, as we have already noted,⁷ he wants all men to become good; and this cannot happen under perverted forms of government. Hence Aristotle in the *Politics*⁸ says ¹⁰ that in bad government the good man is a bad citizen, whereas in good government the good man and the good citizen are one and the same thing. And these just forms of government aim at freedom, i.e. that men should exist for their own sake. For citizens do not ¹¹ exist for the sake of consuls, nor the people for the sake of the king, but on the contrary consuls exist for the sake of the citizens and the king for the people; for just as a political community is not formed for the sake of the laws, but the laws are framed for the benefit of the political community, in the same way those whose lives are governed by the law are not there for the sake of the legislator, but rather he is there for their sake, as Aristotle says in those writings he left to us on this subject.⁹ Thus it is apparent that, ¹² although a consul or a king are masters over others with respect to means, with respect to ends they are the servants of others; and this is especially true of the monarch, who is to be considered without doubt the servant of all men. Thus it is already clear that the very same goal which requires the formulation of laws requires also that there be a monarch. Therefore mankind living under a mon- ¹³ arch is in its ideal state; from this it follows that monarchy is necessary for the well-being of the world.

⁶ These are Aristotle's three forms of faulty or perverted government ('democracy' here meaning demagoguery or rule of the mob), contrasted (in inverse order) with the corresponding forms of good government. Good governments are those which give their citizens freedom (see par. 10) and thus enable them to lead the good life. See *Politics* 3, 7.

⁷ i.e. in the previous chapter (pars. 13–15).

⁸ Again Aristotle does not say exactly this, but he considers the question in *Politics* 3, 4; Aquinas in his commentary on *Ethics* 5, 3 says precisely this.

⁹ *Politics* 4, 1 1289a 13–15.

xiii

Besides, the person who is himself capable of being best disposed to rule is capable of disposing others best,¹ for in every action the primary aim of the agent, whether it act because its nature compels it to or as a matter of free choice, is to reproduce its own likeness.²

² Hence every agent, precisely as agent, takes pleasure in its own action; for since everything which exists desires its own being, and in acting the agent's being is in some sense enhanced, of necessity pleasure ensues, since pleasure is always connected to something which is desired. Therefore nothing acts unless it has the qualities which are to be communicated to the thing acted upon; hence Aristotle in the *Metaphysics* says: 'The movement from potentiality to actuality comes about by means of something which is already actual';³ any attempt to do otherwise would be a vain attempt. And thus we can refute the error of those who, expressing worthy sentiments and doing wrong, nonetheless believe they can influence the lives and behaviour of others, not realizing that Jacob's hands carried more weight than his words, even though his hands deceived and his words revealed the truth.⁴ Hence Aristotle in the *Ethics* says: 'In matters where passions and actions are involved, words carry less conviction than actions.'⁵ Hence a voice from heaven asked the sinner David: 'Why do you tell of my righteousness?';⁶ as if to say: 'You speak in vain, since your words are belied by what you are.' From which it can be deduced that a person who wishes to dispose others for the best must himself be disposed for the best. But only the monarch can be best disposed for ruling. This can be explained

¹ It has been suggested that this opening statement, with its careful repetition of 'is capable of' [*potest*], may reflect Dante's awareness of the gap between his ideal monarch (as described in the previous chapters) and possible shortcomings in an actual incumbent. The abstract nature of Dante's monarch was as it happens savagely attacked by Guido Vernani, his earliest critic, who argued that only Christ could have the qualities Dante ascribes to him.

² On this point and its development in par. 2, see Boyde, *Dante Philomythes*, p. 257.

³ *Metaphysics* 9, 8 1049b 24–26; cf. *Mon.* III, xiii, 6; see Boyde, *Dante Philomythes*, pp. 60–2, 255.

⁴ Genesis 27, 1 f. Although Jacob's true identity was revealed by his voice, his hands (disguised with goatskin to make them feel hairy) seemed to be those of Esau, and were taken as the more convincing evidence of identity by Isaac.

⁵ *Ethics* 10, 1.

⁶ Psalms 49, 16 (AV 50, 16).

as follows: any thing is the more easily and perfectly disposed to acquire a particular disposition and to act in accordance with it, the less there is in it which is opposed to that disposition; thus those who have never studied philosophy acquire the habit of philosophical truth more easily and perfectly than those who have studied for a long time and become familiar with false notions. So that Galen rightly comments that such people take twice as long to acquire knowledge.⁷ Therefore since the monarch can have no occasion for greed (or in any event of all men the very least occasion), as we saw earlier⁸ (and this is *not* the case with other rulers), and since it is greed alone which perverts judgment and obstructs justice, it follows that he alone, or he more than anyone else, can be well disposed to rule, since of all men he can have judgment and justice in the highest degree. These are the two chief qualities needed by the legislator and the executor of the law, as that holy king bore witness when he asked God for those things needed by the king and the king's son: 'God', he said, 'give your judgment to the king and your justice to the king's son.'⁹ What was affirmed in the minor premiss is therefore quite correct, i.e. that the monarch alone is the person who can be best disposed to rule: therefore the monarch alone can best dispose other people. It follows from this that monarchy is necessary to the well-being of the world.

xiv

And what can be brought about by a single agent is better done by a single agent than by more than one.¹ This can be explained as follows: let there be one agent (A) by which something can be brought about, and let there be several agents (A and B) by which it can equally be brought about; now if that same thing which can be brought about by means of A and B can be brought about by A alone, then B is introduced unnecessarily, because nothing is achieved by the introduction of B, since that same thing was already achieved by means of A alone. And since the introduction of any 2

⁷ Galen, *De cognoscendis curandisque animi morbis*, 10.

⁸ i.e. in ch. xi, pars. 11–12.

⁹ Psalms 71, 1 (AV 72, 1). David asks God for wisdom for his son Solomon.

¹ The 'principle of the sufficient cause' is an application of the principle that God does not like *superfluum*, as is explained in this and the following paragraph.

such means is unnecessary and pointless, and everything which is pointless is displeasing to God and to nature, and everything which is displeasing to God and to nature is evil (as is self-evident), it follows that not only is it better that something should be brought about by a single agent, where that is possible, rather than by several, but that being brought about by a single agent is good, by more than one is in absolute terms bad.² Moreover, a thing is said to be better the closer it is to the best; and the goal itself is the measure of what is best; but to be brought about by a single agent is closer³ to the goal; therefore it is better. And that it is closer can be shown as follows: let the goal be C; let the achieving of that goal by a single agent be A, and by several agents be A and B; it is clear that to go from A through B to C is a longer route than to go from A directly to C. But mankind can be ruled by one supreme ruler, who is the monarch. On this point it must of course be noted that when we say 'mankind can be ruled by one supreme ruler', this is not to be taken to mean that trivial decisions in every locality can be made directly by him – even though it can happen that local laws are sometimes defective and there may be a need for guidance in implementing them, as is clear from what Aristotle says in the fifth book of the *Ethics* when he commends the principle of equity.⁴ For nations, kingdoms and cities have characteristics of their own, which need to be governed by different laws; for law is a rule which governs life. Thus the Scythians, who live beyond the seventh zone and are exposed to nights and days of very unequal length, and who endure an almost unbearable intensity of cold, need to have one set of laws, while the Garamantes require different laws, since they live in the equatorial zone and always have days and nights of equal length, and because of the excessive heat of the air cannot bear to cover themselves with clothes.⁵ It is rather to be understood

² To choose the less 'economic' or 'efficient' means is 'simply' or 'in absolute terms' bad.

³ It is 'closer' in the sense of reaching the goal by a more direct (i.e. more economical) route, involving no *superfluum*.

⁴ The principle of equity [*epiikeia*] is recommended by Aristotle (*Ethics* 5, 10 1137a 31–1138a 2) when general laws need to be applied to particular cases not envisaged specifically in the legislation. It is discussed by Aquinas in *Summa Theologiae*, 2a 2ae, q. 120, art. 1 [*epicheia quae apud nos dicitur aequitas*], and in Lecture XVI of Book V *In Eth.*

⁵ The Scythians and the Garamantes represent the extreme limits of the inhabitable land mass according to Dante's world view, occupying respectively the arctic region (specifically, north of the Black Sea and NE of the Caspian) and the equa-

in this sense, that mankind is to be ruled by him in those matters which are common to all men and of relevance to all, and is to be guided towards peace by a common law. This rule or law should be received from him by individual rulers, just as the practical intellect, in order to proceed to action, receives the major premiss from the theoretical intellect, and then derives the minor premiss appropriate to its own particular case, and then proceeds to the action in question.⁶ And it is not only possible for one person to do this, but necessary for this to come from one person, to avoid any confusion about universal principles. Moses himself writes in the Law⁷ that he did just this when, having chosen certain leaders from the tribes of the sons of Israel, he left less important judgments to them, retaining for himself alone the more important ones which concerned all of them; these judgments of more general relevance were then applied by the leaders to their tribes, according to what was appropriate for each particular tribe. Therefore it is better for mankind to be ruled by one person than by several, and thus by a monarch who is the only ruler; and if this is better, then it is more acceptable to God, since God always wills what is better. And since when there are only two things being compared, the better is the best, it follows that when the choice is between 'one' and 'more than one', not only is the first of these more acceptable to God, but it is entirely acceptable. It follows from this that mankind is in its ideal state when it is ruled by one person; and thus monarchy is necessary to the well-being of the world.

torial or 'equinoctial' zone (specifically, a region of SW Libya in North Africa). Dante's knowledge of them came from Orosius, *Adversus Paganos historiarum libri VII* (henceforth *Hist.*) 1, 2 and Albertus Magnus, *De natura loci* III, 5 (Alberti Magni *Opera Omnia* V, Pars II, Monasterii Westfalorum in aedibus Aschendorff 1980). On the seven 'climates' or climatic zones into which medieval geographers divided the northern hemisphere, and on the Scythians and Garamantes, see *Dict.*, pp. 304–5 and 567.

⁶ i.e. the relationship of the monarch to lesser princes is analogous to that of theoretical intellect to practical intellect, inasmuch as each supplies the general (universal) principle which is applied to particular circumstances and then acted on. The procedure in each case is analogous to a syllogistic argument in consisting of three steps, the third of which 'concludes' the operation (with a deduction in the case of a syllogism, an action in the other cases).

⁷ Exodus 18, 13–26; Deuteronomy 1, 9–18.

Again, I say that being, unity and goodness are related in a sequence, according to the fifth sense of the term 'priority'.¹ Being naturally comes before unity, and unity before goodness: perfect being is perfect unity, and perfect unity is perfect goodness; and the further removed something is from perfect being, the further it is from being one and consequently from being good. Therefore in every species of thing the best is that which is perfectly one, as Aristotle says in the *Metaphysics*.² This is how it comes about that unity seems to be the root of what it is to be good, and plurality the root of what it is to be evil; that is why Pythagoras in his correlations placed unity on the side of goodness and plurality on the side of evil, as is clear in the first book of the *Metaphysics*.³ Hence it can be seen that to sin is nothing other than to spurn unity and move towards plurality; the Psalmist saw this when he said: 'From the fruit of the corn, the wine and the oil they have been multiplied.'⁴ It is clear then that everything which is good is good for this reason: that it constitutes a unity. And since concord, in itself, is a good, it is clear that it consists in some unity as in its root. What this root is will appear if we consider the nature or meaning of concord, for concord is a uniform movement of several wills; from this definition it is clear that unity of wills, which is what is signified by 'uniform movement', is the root of concord or indeed is concord itself. For just as we would describe a number of clods of earth as being 'in concord' because of their all falling towards the centre of the world, and a number of flames as 'in concord' because of their all rising towards its circumference,⁵ if they did this of their own free will; in the same way we describe a number of people as being 'in concord' when they move all together and of

¹ Aristotle, *Categories* 12 lists the five kinds of priority. Of the fifth kind he says: 'that which is in some way the cause of the other's existence might reasonably be called prior by nature' (14b 10-12); cf. *Summulae* III, 30. See Boyde, *Dante Philomythes*, pp. 217-20, on 'oneness' and multiplicity.

² *Metaphysics* 10, 2 1053b 20-8; 1054a 9-13.

³ *Metaphysics* I, 5 986a 15-b 2.

⁴ Psalms 4, 8 (AV 4, 7). The significance of this quotation is not immediately apparent; it becomes clearer if one bears in mind its context, which talks of the unity of God's light on the just man (contrasted with the multiplicity of material goods alluded to here).

⁵ i.e. towards the heaven of the moon, the limit of the earth's atmosphere.

their own free will towards one thing which is in their wills formally,⁶ just as there is one quality (heaviness) formally in the clods of earth, and another (lightness) in the flames. For the capacity to will is a potentiality, and its form is the image of good which is perceived; and this form, just like other forms, is one in itself and becomes multiple according to the multiplicity of the material which receives it – just like soul, number and other forms which are found in composites.

Having made these preliminary points in order to clarify the proposition to be advanced for our purposes, we may reason as follows: all concord depends on the unity which is in wills; mankind in its ideal state represents a kind of concord; for just as one man in his ideal state spiritually and physically is a kind of concord (and the same holds true of a household, a city, and a kingdom), so is the whole of mankind; thus the whole of mankind in its ideal state depends on the unity which is in men's wills.⁷ But this cannot be unless there is one will which controls and directs all the others towards one goal, since the wills of mortals require guidance on account of the seductive pleasures of youth, as Aristotle teaches at the end of the *Ethics*.⁸ Nor can such a single will exist, unless there is one ruler who rules over everybody, whose will can control and guide all the other wills. Now if all the above conclusions⁹ are true – as they are – for mankind to be in its ideal state there must be a monarch in the world, and consequently the well-being of the world requires a monarchy.

⁶ i.e. as 'form', as goal or objective (the meaning is clarified by the definition of 'form' [*forma*] in the next paragraph). The parallel between clods of earth and men strikes us as strange because we are not used to language which applies equally to animate and inanimate processes in nature, i.e. those which involve consciousness and volition and those which do not. For Dante, as for Aristotle, such language was normal.

⁷ Aquinas *In Eth.* devotes Lecture VI on Book IX to a discussion of concord in these terms.

⁸ *Ethics* 10, 9 1179b 32f.

⁹ i.e. not just the conclusions reached in this chapter, but *all* the conclusions reached so far from ch. v on – the conclusions, as Bruno Nardi puts it, of 'eleven chapters inspired by Aristotle's metaphysics, physics and ethics'. But the answer to the question of where this monarchy is to be found does not come from Aristotle; that answer is supplied by Virgil, and will provide the subject-matter of Book II.

xvi

All the arguments advanced so far are confirmed by a remarkable historical fact:¹ namely the state of humanity which the Son of God either awaited, or himself chose to bring about, when he was on the point of becoming man for the salvation of mankind. For if we review the ages and the dispositions of men from the fall of our first parents (which was the turning-point at which we went astray), we shall not find that there ever was peace throughout the world except under the immortal Augustus, when a perfect monarchy
 2 existed. That mankind was then happy in the calm of universal peace is attested by all historians² and by famous poets; even the chronicler of Christ's gentleness³ deigned to bear witness to it; and finally Paul called that most happy state 'the fullness of time'.⁴ Truly that time was 'full', as were all temporal things, for no ministry to our happiness lacked its minister. What the state of the world
 3 has been since that seamless garment⁵ was first rent by the talon of cupidity we can read about – would that we might not witness it.
 4 O human race, how many storms and misfortunes and shipwrecks must toss you about while, transformed into a many-headed beast,⁶
 5 you strive after conflicting things. You are sick in your intellects, both of them,⁷ and in your affections; you do not nurture your higher intellect with inviolable principles, nor your lower intellect

¹ The arguments from philosophical principles (abstract, based in reason) which have been advanced up to this point are now shown to be confirmed by the facts of history (concrete, based in experience), leading to the impassioned conclusion of Book I: both these sources of knowledge and understanding are ignored by humanity, as is also the enlightenment that comes from the Scriptures, which speak directly to the human heart.

² Notably by Orosius, in whose view of world history the temporal coinciding of Christ's birth and peace under the rule of Augustus is the pivotal event; see *Hist.* 3, 8 and 6, 22 (and II, x, n. 7).

³ i.e. Luke 2, 1. Luke does not talk of peace, but biblical exegetes assumed that unless there had been universal peace Augustus could not have issued a universal edict.

⁴ Galatians 4, 4.

⁵ Christ's seamless garment (John 19, 23) symbolizes the unity of the empire; the rending of the garment was effected, in Dante's eyes, by the donation of Constantine, an event whose significance will be examined in III, x (see n. 1). The expression had been used by Pope Boniface VIII in *Unam sanctam* to signify the indissoluble unity of the church.

⁶ Cf. Revelation 12, 3 and 17, 9.

⁷ i.e. theoretical and practical.

with the lessons of experience, nor your affections with the sweetness of divine counsel, when it is breathed into you by the trumpet of the holy spirit: 'Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.'⁸

⁸ Psalms 132, 1 (AV 133, 1).

Book Two

i

'Why have the nations raged, and the peoples meditated vain things? The kings of the earth have arisen, and the princes have gathered together against the Lord and against his Christ. Let us burst their chains and cast their yoke from us.'¹

- ² When confronted with an unfamiliar phenomenon whose cause we do not comprehend we usually feel amazement; and equally, when we do understand the cause, we look down almost mockingly on those who continue to be amazed.² For my own part, I used once to be amazed that the Roman people had set themselves as rulers over the whole world without encountering any resistance, for I looked at the matter only in a superficial way and I thought that they had attained their supremacy not by right but only by force of arms.³ But when I penetrated with my mind's eye to the heart of the matter and understood through unmistakable signs that this was the work of divine providence, my amazement faded and a kind of scornful derision took its place, on seeing how the nations raged against the supremacy of the Roman people, on seeing the

by right
force of arms

nations resisting empire

¹ Psalms 2, 1-3.

² On the theme of amazement caused by a failure to recognize hidden causes (and specifically the role of providence in human history), cf. Boethius, *De consolazione philosophiae* 4, 5-6.

³ As a young man Dante had accepted the Augustinian view of history which saw Roman supremacy as based on aggressive conquest (*De civ. Dei* iv, 4). Charles Davis in his classic study of Dante's vision of history and his understanding of the role of the Roman empire (*Dante and the Idea of Rome*, Oxford, 1957) examines the possible influence of Remigio de' Girolami on Dante's change of attitude (pp. 83-6).

Book II

peoples meditate vain things, as I myself once did; and I grieved too that kings and princes should be united only in this one thing: in opposing their Lord and his Anointed, the Roman prince. For this reason I can cry out in defence of that glorious people and of Caesar – mockingly, yet not without some feeling of grief – along with him who cried out for the prince of Heaven: 'Why did the nations rage, and the peoples meditate vain things? The kings of the earth have arisen, and the princes have gathered together, against their Lord and against his Christ.' But since natural love does not allow scorn to last long, preferring (like the summer sun which as it rises disperses the morning clouds and shines forth radiantly) to cast scorn aside and to pour forth the light of correction, I too then, in order to break the chains of ignorance of kings and princes such as these, and to show that the human race is free of their yoke, shall take heart along with the most holy prophet, by making my own the words of his which follow: 'Let us burst their chains, and cast their yoke from us.' These two things will be sufficiently accomplished when I have brought to completion the second part of my present project and shown the truth of the question we are now considering. For showing that the Roman empire is founded on right will not only disperse the fog of ignorance from the eyes of kings and princes who usurp control of public affairs for themselves, falsely believing the Roman people to have done the same thing, but it will make all men understand that they are free of the yoke of usurpers of this kind. The truth of the matter can be revealed not only by the light of human reason but also by the radiance of divine authority; when these two are in agreement, heaven and earth must of necessity both give their assent. Relying therefore on the faith of which I spoke earlier⁴ and trusting in the testimony of reason and authority, I proceed to resolve the second question.

ii

Having sufficiently investigated the truth concerning the first question, within those limits the subject itself allows,¹ we must now

⁴ Cf. *Mon.* I, i, 6.

¹ The Aristotelian principle that one must take into consideration the limits imposed by the subject under discussion is repeatedly emphasized by Dante in this book: cf. par. 7, and II, v, 6.

investigate the truth in relation to the second: that is, did the Roman people take on the dignity of empire by right? The starting-point of this investigation is to see what that truth is to which the arguments in this investigation can be referred back as to their own first principle.² We must bear in mind then that, just as art is found at three levels, in the mind of the craftsman, in his instrument, and in the material shaped by his craft, so too we can consider nature at three levels. For nature is in the mind of the first mover, who is God; then in the heavens, as in the instrument by means of which the image of eternal goodness is set forth in fluctuating matter. And just as, when the craftsman is perfect and his instrument is in excellent order, if a flaw occurs in the work of art³ it is to be imputed exclusively to the material; in the same way, since God attains the highest perfection and his instrument (i.e. the heavens) cannot fall short of the perfection appropriate to it (as is clear from those things philosophy teaches us about the heavens), our conclusion is this: whatever flaws there are in earthly things are flaws due to the material of which they are constituted, and are no part of the intention of God the creator and the heavens; and whatever good there is in earthly things, since it cannot come from the material (which exists only as a potentiality), comes primarily from God the maker and secondarily from the heavens, which are the instrument of God's handiwork, which is commonly called 'nature'. From what has been said it is now clear that right, being a good, exists firstly in the mind of God; and since everything which is in the mind of God is God (in conformity with that saying 'Whatever was made was life in him'⁴), and since God principally wills himself, it follows that right is willed by God as being something which is in him. And since in God will and what is willed are one and the same thing, it further follows that divine will is right itself. And again it follows from this that in the created world⁵ right is simply the image of

² The principle Dante seeks will be articulated in par. 6. The procedure exactly parallels that adopted in Book I.

³ 'Art' [*ars*] is the capacity to make, produce, create, whether divine or human; 'work of art' here means any product of this capacity. On the role of the heavens as the instrument of God's art, see Boyde, *Dante Philomythes*, pp. 132-43.

⁴ John 1, 3. (The AV interprets this phrase differently, with a break after 'was made', and a new sentence 'In him was life'.)

⁵ Literally, 'in things' [*in rebus*]. The expression is used repeatedly as the argument evolves to indicate the created (material, sublunary) world in which natural laws

divine will; and thus it follows that whatever is not in harmony with divine will cannot be right, and whatever is in harmony with divine will is by that very fact right. And so to ask whether something happened by right, even though the words are different, is the same thing as asking whether it happened in accordance with God's will. Let us therefore formulate this principle: that what God wills in human society must be considered true and pure right. Besides it must be remembered that, as Aristotle teaches at the beginning of the *Ethics*, certainty is not to be sought in the same way in every subject, but according as the nature of the subject-matter allows.⁶ Therefore our arguments will be derived with sufficient rigour from the principle we have formulated, if we seek proof of the right of that glorious people in clear signs and the authoritative statements of wise men. For the will of God in itself is indeed invisible; but the invisible things of God 'are clearly perceived by being understood through the things he has made';⁷ for although the seal is hidden, the wax stamped by the seal (hidden though it is) yields clear knowledge of it.⁸ Nor is it a cause for amazement if God's will is to be sought through signs, since even the will of a human being is discernible to the outside world only through signs.⁹

iii

On this question I therefore affirm that it was by right, and not by usurping, that the Roman people took on the office of the monarch (which is called 'empire') over all men. This can be proved firstly as follows: it is appropriate that the noblest race should rule over

operate and by which human experience is defined. The emphasis will vary according to context, depending on whether Dante is talking about the workings of nature, or human endeavour, or both (as here).

⁶ *Ethics* 1, 3 1094b 23-5 and 7 1098a 25-8 (see n. 1).

⁷ Romans 1, 20.

⁸ The wax-and-seal metaphor for the relation of the created world to God, implicit from the opening sentence of the treatise, now becomes explicit, and provides the key to the argument developed in Book II, which will examine events in human history which enable us to perceive God's will; see *Mon.* 1, viii, n. 1.

⁹ An individual knows his own will through introspection, but no human being has access to another's mind. This idea also will be applied to the interpretation of Roman history in ch. v (par. 6), and will be developed in the remainder of that chapter.

① noblest
race
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other

all the others; the Roman people was the noblest; therefore it was
 3 appropriate that they should rule over all the others. The major
 premiss is proved by an argument from reason: for since 'honour
 is the reward for virtue'¹ and every position of authority is an
 honour, every position of authority is the reward of virtue. But we
 know that men become noble through virtue, either their own virtue
 4 or that of their forebears. For 'nobility is virtue and ancient wealth',
 as Aristotle says in the *Politics*;² and according to Juvenal:

nobility of mind is the sole and only virtue.³

These two sayings refer to two kinds of nobility, i.e. a man's own
 nobility and that of his ancestors. Therefore the reward of a position
 of authority is appropriate to the noble by reason of the cause of
 5 their nobility.⁴ And since rewards should be commensurate with
 deserts, as we read in the words of the Gospel: 'With the same
 measure you have applied to others you will be measured',⁵ it is
 appropriate that the most noble should have the highest position
 6 of authority over others. The minor premiss⁶ is supported by the
 testimony of the ancients; for our divine poet Virgil bears witness
 throughout the whole of the *Aeneid*, to his everlasting memory, that
 the father of the Roman people was that most glorious king Aeneas;
 and Titus Livy, the illustrious chronicler of Roman deeds, confirms
 this in the first part of his book,⁷ which takes as its starting-point

Aeneid

¹ Aristotle, *Ethics* 4, 3 1123b 35.

² *Politics* 4, 8 1294a 21-2.

³ *Satires* 8, 20. The line is slightly different in modern critical editions of the text. Dante may be quoting from memory, as he seems to do elsewhere; see n. 8; II, vii, n. 17; II, ix, n. 6.

⁴ The cause of nobility is virtue, therefore if a position of authority [*prelatio*] is due to virtue it will be due to the noble.

⁵ Matthew 7, 2; Luke 6, 38.

⁶ The minor premiss [*subassumptam*] is that 'the Roman people were the noblest'. The argument developed in this chapter consists of proving that the content of the syllogism enunciated in par. 2 is true. The major premiss is proved in pars. 3-5; the minor premiss occupies the remainder of the chapter: pars. 6-16 establish the nobility of Aeneas and hence of the Romans, using the key testimony of Virgil, the principal witness to Rome's greatness, corroborated by others; par. 17 recapitulates, and reminds us, in case we have lost the thread during this extended review of the evidence, that it bears on the proof of the minor premiss [*ad evidentiam subassumptam*].

⁷ *Ab urbe condita* I, 1, 11. It is uncertain whether Dante had a firsthand knowledge of Livy. The evidence is exhaustively reviewed by A. Martina in *Livio*, ED III, pp. 673-7.

the capture of Troy. It would be beyond me to give a full account 7
 of just how noble this supremely victorious and supremely dutiful
 father was, taking into account not only his own virtue but that of
 his forebears and his wives, whose nobility flowed into him by her-
 editary right: 'but I shall trace the main outlines of the facts'.⁸

Now as far as his own nobility is concerned, we must listen to our 8
 poet when in the first book he introduces Ilioneus as he petitions in
 this manner:

Aeneas was our king; no man more just
 In piety, nor greater in war and arms.⁹

Let us listen to him too in the sixth book, when he speaks of the 9
 dead Misenus, who had served Hector in battle and who after Hec-
 tor's death had entered the service of Aeneas; he says that Misenus
 'followed no less a hero',¹⁰ comparing Aeneas with Hector, whom
 Homer glorifies above all others, as Aristotle relates in that book of
 the *Ethics* which deals with behaviour to be avoided.¹¹ As far as 10
 hereditary nobility is concerned, we find that each of the three
 regions into which the world is divided¹² made him noble, both
 through his ancestors and through his wives. For Asia did so
 through his more immediate forebears, such as Assaracus and the
 others who ruled over Phrygia, a region of Asia; hence our poet
 says in the third book:

After the Gods saw fit to overthrow
 The might of Asia and Priam's guiltless race.¹³

Europe did so with his most ancient male forebear, i.e. Dardanus; 11
 Africa did so too with his most ancient female forebear Electra,
 daughter of King Atlas of great renown; our poet bears witness
 concerning both of them in his eighth book, where Aeneas speaks
 in these words to Evander:

⁸ *Aeneid* I, 342. Again Dante is either quoting from memory, or from a text with the variant reading *vestigia* instead of *fastigia*.

⁹ *ibid.* I, 544-5.

¹⁰ *ibid.* VI, 170.

¹¹ *Ethics* 7, I 1145a 20-3.

¹² This tripartite division of the world derives from Orosius, *Hist.* I, 1; cf. also Alberti Magni *De natura loci*, Tract. 3 Cap. 5 [*De distinctione trium partium orbis: Asiae, Europae et Africae*]; and see *Mon.* I, xiv, n. 5.

¹³ *Aeneid* III, 1-2.

Dardanus,
First father and founder of the city of Troy,
Born of Electra, as the Greeks maintain,
Comes to the Teucrians; mighty Atlas begat her,
Who bears the spheres of heaven on his shoulders.¹⁴

- 12 That Dardanus was of European birth our bard¹⁵ proclaims in the third book:

There is a land the Greeks call Hesperia,
Ancient, mighty in arms and fertile soil.
Oenotrians lived there; a later generation
Has called the nation Italy after their leader:
This is our homeland; Dardanus was born here.¹⁶

- 13 That Atlas came from Africa is confirmed by the mountain there which bears his name. Orosius in his description of the world tells us it is in Africa in these words: 'Its furthest boundary is Mount Atlas and the islands they call Fortune' ('its' meaning 'Africa's', because he is talking about Africa).¹⁷

- 14 In similar fashion I find that he was also made noble by marriage. For his first wife, Creusa, the daughter of king Priam, was from Asia, as may be gathered from what was said earlier. And that she was his wife our poet bears witness in his third book, where Andromache questions Aeneas as a father about his son Ascanius in this way:

What of your boy Ascanius,
Whom Creusa bore when Troy was smouldering?
Is he alive and does he breathe earth's air?¹⁸

- 15 His second wife was Dido, queen and mother of the Carthaginians in Africa; and that she was his wife our bard proclaims in the fourth book, for he says there of Dido:

¹⁴ *ibid.* viii, 134-7.

¹⁵ The word 'bard' [*vates*] underlines Virgil's prophetic function, reiterated in the verb [*vaticinatur*] used in par. 15.

¹⁶ *Aeneid* iii, 163-7.

¹⁷ *Hist.* 1, 2. Mount Atlas is on the NW coast of Africa; the Fortunate Isles are Madeira and the Canaries.

¹⁸ *Aeneid* iii, 339-40. Line 340 [*quem tibi iam Troia...?*] is the only incomplete line in the *Aeneid* where the sense is incomplete (Servius *ad Aen.* iii, 340 draws attention to the incomplete sense). In medieval manuscripts the lacuna is occasionally filled as Dante fills it here (inappropriately, as Ascanius was born long before the destruction of Troy).

Dido no longer thinks of a secret love:
She calls it marriage; this name conceals her sin.¹⁹

The third was Lavinia, mother of the Albans and the Romans, the 16 daughter of King Latinus and his heir as well, if our poet is to be believed in his last book, where he introduces the defeated Turnus making supplication to Aeneas in these words:

You have won; the Ausonians have seen
The vanquished man stretch forth his upturned hands:
Lavinia is your wife.²⁰

This last wife was from Italy, the most noble region of Europe. When 17 these facts in support of the minor premiss are borne in mind, who is not satisfied that the father of the Roman people, and as a consequence that people itself, was the noblest in the world? Or who will fail to recognize divine predestination in that double confluence of blood²¹ from every part of the world into a single man?

iv

Moreover whatever is brought to full realization with the aid of miracles is willed by God, and consequently comes about by right. And it is clear that this is true because, as Thomas says in his third book *Contra Gentiles*,¹ a miracle is something done by divine intervention outside the normal order in our created world.² And 2 thus he proves that only God has the power to perform miracles; and this is corroborated by the authority of Moses, where he tells how, when confronted with the gnats, Pharaoh's magicians, using natural principles in the service of their arts and failing, said: 'This is the finger of God.'³ Now if a miracle is a direct action by the 3

¹⁹ *Aeneid* iv, 171-2.

²⁰ *ibid.* xii, 936-7.

²¹ i.e. from ancestors and wives.

¹ Aquinas, *Contra Gentiles* 3, 101-2.

² See ii, ii, n. 5.

³ *Exodus* 8, 16-19. The reference is to the third of the plagues visited on Pharaoh, the plague of *scinifes*: 'a kind of stinging insect' (Lewis and Short), 'lice' in the Authorised Version, 'mosquitoes' in the New Jerusalem Bible, 'maggots' in the New English Bible, 'gnats' in the New Revised Standard Version and the Good News Bible. Orosius, *Hist.* 7, 26, reviewing the plagues of Egypt and drawing a parallel with ten calamities which befell Rome, describes *scinifes*, with the air of one speaking from personal experience, as 'very small and troublesome flies [*musculas. . . parvissimas ac saevissimas*], which often in midsummer gather in dense

First Cause without the mediation of secondary agents – as Thomas himself proves with sufficient rigour in the book just cited⁴ – then when a portent takes place in favour of something, it is wicked to say that the thing so favoured is not ordained by God as something pleasing to him. It is therefore holy⁵ to acknowledge the converse: the Roman empire was aided by the help of miracles to achieve supremacy; therefore it was willed by God; and consequently it was and is founded on right. That God performed miracles so that the Roman empire might be supreme is confirmed by the testimony of illustrious authors. For Livy tells in the first part of his work⁶ that in the time of Numa Pompilius, the second king of the Romans, a shield fell from heaven into God's chosen city as he was sacrificing according to the pagan rite. Lucan recalls this miracle in the ninth book of the *Pharsalia* where he describes the incredible force of the South wind to which Libya is exposed; for he says:

No doubt the shields,
Which chosen youths bore on patrician necks,
Fell before Numa as he sacrificed;
The South wind or the North had robbed their bearers
Of shields which now are ours.⁷

7 When the Gauls, having captured the rest of the city, and trusting to the shadows of night, secretly stole up to the Capitol (whose fall would have meant the annihilation of the very name of Rome), a goose never seen there before cried warning that the Gauls had come and roused the guardians to defend the Capitol (Livy and many other illustrious writers concur in their testimony).⁸ Our poet recalled this incident when he described Aeneas' shield in the eighth book; for he writes as follows:

swarms about filthy places and as they buzz around settle down and lodge in men's hair and on the hides of cattle, stinging their victims and causing acute pain'.

⁴ *Contra Gentiles* 3, 99.

⁵ If it is impious to assert an untruth, then logically it is holy to assert its opposite.

⁶ *Ab urbe condita* 1, 20, 4; 5, 54, 7.

⁷ *Pharsalia* IX, 477–80. The story of the holy shields is told at greater length by Ovid, *Fasti* III, 259–398 and mentioned by Virgil, *Aeneid* VIII, 664.

⁸ *Ab urbe condita* 5, 47, 4–5. Livy speaks of more than one goose, but Virgil's testimony is decisive. Other writers include St Augustine, *De civ. Dei* 2, 22 and 3, 8. Orosius, *Hist.* 2, 19, does not mention the geese.

At the top before the temple stood
Manlius, guardian of the Tarpeian rock,
And held the lofty heights of the Capitol;
The new-built palace was rough with Romulus' thatch.
Here flying through the golden colonnades
A silver goose cried warning that the Gauls
Were at the gate.⁹

And when the nobility of Rome, under siege by Hannibal, was fallen so low that all that remained to complete the destruction of Roman might was the onslaught of the Carthaginians on the city, the victors were unable to complete their victory because of a sudden unbearably violent hailstorm which threw them into confusion. Livy recounts this among other events in the Punic wars.¹⁰ And when, during the siege of Porsenna, Cloelia – a woman, and a prisoner – broke her chains and swam across the Tiber with the miraculous help of God, as almost all Roman historians relate to her glory, was her crossing not miraculous?¹¹ It was utterly fitting that he who ordained all things from eternity in harmonious order should operate in this manner: that just as he would, when visible,¹² perform miracles as testimony for invisible things, so he should, while still invisible,¹³ perform them as testimony for visible things.¹⁴

V

Moreover, whoever has the good of the community as his goal has the achievement of right as his goal. That the one necessarily follows from the other can be shown in this way: right is a relationship¹ between one individual and another in respect of things and people; when it is respected it preserves human society and when it is viol-

⁹ *Aeneid* VIII, 652–6.

¹⁰ *Ab urbe condita* 26, 11, 1–3; Orosius, *Hist.* 4, 17.

¹¹ Cloelia is mentioned by Livy, *Ab urbe condita* 2, 13, 6–11; Orosius, *Hist.* 2, 5; and on the shield in *Aeneid* VIII, 651 (only Virgil speaks of broken chains [vinclis . . . ruptis]).

¹² i.e. when made man in the person of Christ.

¹³ i.e. before the incarnation.

¹⁴ In treating these events as miracles Dante is not necessarily following his sources (Augustine, for example, is scathing about the role of the geese in saving Rome, see Introduction, pp. xviii–xix).

¹ Cf. Aristotle, *Ethics* 5, 5–6.

ated it destroys it. For the description of it given in the *Digests*² does not say what right is, but describes it in terms of its practical application. If therefore our definition correctly embraces both the essence and the purpose of right, and if the goal of any society is the common good of its members, it necessarily follows that the purpose of every right is the common good; and it is impossible that there can be a right which does not aim at the common good. Hence Cicero is correct when he says in the *De inventione*³ that laws are always to be interpreted for the benefit of the community. For if laws are not framed for the benefit of those who are subject to the law, they are laws in name only, but in reality they cannot be laws; for laws must bind men together for their mutual benefit. For this reason Seneca speaks appositely of the law when he says in *De quatuor virtutibus* that 'law is the bond of human society'.⁴ Thus it is clear that whoever has the good of the community as his goal has the achievement of right as his goal. Therefore if the Romans had the good of the community as their goal, it will be true to say that the achievement of right was their goal. That the Roman people in conquering the world did have the good of which we have spoken as their goal is shown by their deeds, for, having repressed all greed (which is always harmful to the community) and cherishing universal peace and freedom, that holy, dutiful and glorious people can be seen to have disregarded personal advantage in order to promote the public interest for the benefit of mankind.⁵ Thus with good reason it was written: 'The Roman empire is born of the fountain-head of piety.'⁶

² The *Digests* are a compilation of extracts from the writings of the jurists assembled at the instigation of Justinian in 529. The description given there was not a rigorous definition; see P. Fiorelli, 'Sul senso del diritto nella Monarchia', in *Lecture classensi* 16, Ravenna 1987, pp. 79-97.

³ *De inventione* 1, 38 (Dante uses the title *Prima rethorica*).

⁴ The *De quatuor virtutibus* (not in fact by Seneca) is now attributed to S. Martin of Dumio, Archbishop of Braga in Portugal (d. 580).

⁵ This interpretation of Roman history as the triumph of civic unselfishness is, as noted (see II, 1, n. 3 and Introduction, p. xix), consciously opposed to St Augustine, who regarded Roman conquests through aggressive war as acts of brigandage [*magna latrocinia*].

⁶ This phrase is used in the *Legenda aurea* by Jacopo da Varagine à propos of Constantine's refusal to attempt a cure for his leprosy by bathing in the blood of 3000 slaughtered children, as he had been counselled.

But since it is only through external signs that anything about the intentions of all free agents is revealed to the outside world,⁷ and since our arguments must be sought in accordance with our subject matter, as we have already said,⁸ it will suffice for our purposes if we discover indubitable signs revealing the intention of the Roman people both in its collegiate bodies and in individual citizens. As for its collegiate bodies,⁹ which seem in some sense to function as a bond between individuals and the community, the sole authority of Cicero in the *De officiis* is sufficient: 'So long as the power of the state was exercised through acts of service and not of oppression, wars were waged either on behalf of our allies or to safeguard our supremacy, and the consequences of wars were mild or else unavoidable; the senate was a haven and a refuge for kings, peoples and nations; both our magistrates and our military chiefs strove to win praise for this above all, for defending the provinces and our allies justly and loyally. Thus "protection" of the world might be a more appropriate term than "domination".'¹⁰ These are Cicero's words.

As for individuals, I shall proceed with brief sketches.¹¹ Are they not to be described as having aimed at the common good who strove to increase the public good with toil, with poverty, with exile, with the loss of their children, the loss of their limbs, even the loss of their lives? Did not the great *Cincinnatus* leave us a holy example⁹ of freely relinquishing his high office when his term came to an end? Taken from his plough to become dictator, as Livy relates,¹² after his victory and his triumph he handed back the sceptre of office to the consuls and went back of his own free will to toil at the plough-handle behind his oxen. Cicero indeed, arguing against Epicurus in the *De fine bonorum*, recalls this act of public service

⁷ Cf. *Mon.* II, ii, 8.

⁸ See notes 1 and 6 to *Mon.* II, ii.

⁹ Pre-eminently the Roman senate.

¹⁰ *De officiis* 2, 8, 26-7. Again Dante quotes the text in a form which has minor divergences from modern editions.

¹¹ Most of the Roman heroes celebrated in the paragraphs which follow are mentioned by Augustine, *De civ. Dei* 5, 18, where their actions are interpreted very differently, see e.g. n. 21.

¹² *Ab urbe condita* 3, 26f.; Orosius, *Hist.* 2, 12. Neither Livy nor Orosius talks of a return to the plough, though Orosius mentions the plough-handle ('holding victory in his hands as he had held the handle of his plough...').

42-45

But. right v. achievement of right as goal

approvingly: 'And thus our ancestors led the great Cincinnatus from the plough to make him dictator.'¹³ Did not Fabritius give us a lofty example of resisting avarice when, poor as he was, out of loyalty to the republic he scorned the great sum of gold which was offered him – scorned it and spurned it with disdain, uttering words in keeping with his character? The memory of this incident too is confirmed by our poet in his sixth book when he said:

Fabritius, a great man in his poverty.¹⁴

¹² Did not Camillus give us a memorable example of putting the law before personal advantage? Condemned to exile, according to Livy,¹⁵ after he had freed his besieged country and returned the Roman spoils to Rome, he left the holy city although the whole populace clamoured against his going, and he did not return until permission to come back to Rome was brought to him by authority of the senate. And our poet commends this great spirit in his sixth book when he says:

Camillus bringing back the standards.¹⁶

¹³ Did not the first Brutus teach us that not just all other people but our own children must take second place to freedom of the fatherland? Livy¹⁷ says that when he was consul he condemned his own sons to death for conspiring with the enemy. His glory lives on in our poet's sixth book when he says of him:

In fair freedom's name
The father condemned to death his own two sons
Plotting new wars.¹⁸

¹⁴ What did Mutius not teach us to dare for the fatherland when he attacked Porsenna, who was off his guard, and then watched his own hand which had missed its mark burn in the fire with the same expression on his face as if he saw an enemy being tortured? Even

¹³ *De finibus* 2, 4, 12.

¹⁴ *Aeneid* vi, 843–4.

¹⁵ *Ab urbe condita* 5, 46f. Livy makes no mention of a second exile; the source seems to be Servius *ad Aen.* vi, 825.

¹⁶ *Aeneid* vi, 825.

¹⁷ *Ab urbe condita* 2, 5.

¹⁸ *Aeneid* vi, 820–1.

Livy expresses amazement as he reports this incident.¹⁹ Now add ¹⁵ to their number those most holy victims, the Decii, who laid down their lives dedicated to the salvation of the community, as Livy relates to their glory, not in terms worthy of them but as best he can;²⁰ and that sacrifice (words cannot express it)²¹ of the most stern guardian of liberty, Marcus Cato. The former for the deliverance of their fatherland did not recoil from the shadows of death; the latter, in order to set the world afire with love of freedom, showed the value of freedom when he preferred to die a free man rather than remain alive without freedom. The great renown of all these ¹⁶ men lives on in the words of Cicero. For Cicero says this of the Decii in the *De fine bonorum*: 'When Publius Decius, first in that family to be consul, offered himself up and charged on his horse at full speed into the thick of the Latin ranks, surely he had no thought of personal pleasure, or where or when he might seize it; for he knew that he was about to die, and sought out death with more passionate eagerness than Epicurus thinks we should devote to seeking pleasure. But had this action of his not been praised with good reason, his son would not have imitated it in his fourth consulship; nor would his son's son in his turn, when he was consul in the war against Pyrrhus, have fallen in battle and offered himself to the state as the third victim from succeeding generations of the same family.'²² In the *De officiis* he says of Cato: 'For the situation ¹⁷ of Marcus Cato was no different from that of the others who surrendered to Caesar in Africa. Yet if the others had killed themselves it would perhaps have been accounted a fault in them, because their lives were less austere and their habits more relaxed; but since nature had bestowed on Cato an austerity beyond belief, and he had strengthened it with unfailing constancy, and had always persisted in any resolve or plan he had undertaken, it was fitting that he should die rather than set eyes on the face of the tyrant.'²³

¹⁹ *Ab urbe condita* 2, 12. Mutius' plan to assassinate Porsenna misfired when he killed Porsenna's secretary by mistake instead of the enemy leader himself. When captured, in order to show the fearlessness and resolve of the Romans, Mutius plunged his own hand into the fire and watched expressionless as it burned.

²⁰ *ibid.* 8, 9 and 10, 28.

²¹ Cf. Augustine's unenthusiastic account of Cato in *De civ. Dei* i, 23.

²² *De finibus* 2, 19, 61.

²³ *De officiis* i, 31, 112.

18 Thus two things have been explained; the first is that whoever has the good of the community as his goal has the achievement of right as his goal; the other is that the Roman people in conquering
 19 the world had the public good as their goal. Now it may be argued for our purposes as follows: whoever has right as his goal proceeds with right; the Roman people subjecting the world to its rule had right as its goal, as has been clearly demonstrated by what has been said already in this chapter; therefore the Roman people subjecting the world to its rule did this in accordance with right, and as a
 20 consequence took upon itself the dignity of empire by right. For this conclusion to be inferred from premisses which are all clear, the following statement must be clarified: that whoever has right as his goal proceeds with right. To clarify this it must be borne in mind that each and every thing exists for some purpose; otherwise
 21 it would be useless, which is not possible, as we said earlier.²⁴ And in the same way that each thing exists for its own particular purpose,²⁵ so too each purpose has some thing of which it is the purpose; and so it is impossible strictly speaking for any two things, in so far as they are two, to have the same purpose; for the same inadmissible conclusion would follow, i.e. that one of them would
 22 exist in vain. Now since there exists a purpose of right – as we have already explained – then having postulated the purpose it becomes necessary to postulate right, since the purpose is an intrinsic and necessary effect of right. And since in any relationship of consequentiality it is impossible to have the antecedent without the consequent,²⁶ as for example one cannot have ‘man’ without ‘animal’ – as is clear if one affirms the first while denying the second²⁷ – it is impossible to seek the purpose of right without right, since each and every thing is related to its own particular purpose as consequent is to antecedent; e.g. it is impossible to have a healthy

²⁴ Cf. *Mon.* I, iii, 3.

²⁵ Its own end or purpose can be achieved by that thing alone and by nothing else; hence (par. 22) the purpose stands to the thing in the relationship of antecedent to consequent (see n. 26).

²⁶ The relationship of antecedent to consequent is one of necessary implication; it can exist between concepts (e.g. ‘man’ and ‘animal’, as Dante says here) and between propositions, see II, x, n. 4. The two are logically inseparable: ‘man’ necessarily, by definition, implies ‘animal’.

²⁷ i.e. if one tries to conceive of ‘man’ without the notion of ‘animal’ (by making an affirmative statement ‘X is a man’ along with a negative statement ‘X is not an animal’), the necessary relationship between the two concepts will be apparent.

condition of the limbs without having good health. From this it is quite apparent that one who seeks the purpose of right must seek it with right; nor is this invalidated by the objection which is customarily based on Aristotle’s words where he discusses ‘eubulia’.²⁸ For Aristotle says: ‘Yet it is possible to attain even good by a false syllogism: to attain what one ought, but not by the right means, the middle term being false.’²⁹ For if a true conclusion is in some way arrived at from false premisses,³⁰ this happens by accident, inas-
 24 much as the truth is introduced in the words of the conclusion; for in itself truth never follows from false premisses, but words expressing truth may well follow from words which express falsehood. And
 25 the same is true in actions;³¹ for although the thief may help the poor man with the proceeds of his thieving, nonetheless we cannot call this alms-giving, although it is an action which would be alms-giving if it were done with his own property.³² The same is true of
 26 the purpose of right, because if anything were to be obtained as the purpose of this right but without right, that thing would be the purpose of right (i.e. the common good) in the same way as the giving of stolen goods is alms-giving; and so, since in our proposition we are speaking of the purpose of right as it really is, not just as it appears to be, the objection has no force. The point we were inquiring into is thus quite clear.

vi

Besides it is right to preserve what nature has ordained, for nature in the measures it takes is no less provident than man; if it were so, the effect would surpass its cause in goodness, which is impossible. But we see that in the setting up of collegiate bodies it is not 2

²⁸ i.e. excellence of deliberation, right judgment [*rectitudo consilii*]. . . *per quam aliquis adipiscitur bonum finem*, Aquinas *In Eth.*, Lecture VIII on Book VI: the entire lecture is devoted to *eubulia*, which is discussed by Aristotle in *Ethics* 6, 9].

²⁹ *Ethics* 6, 9 1142b 22–4. Dante is anticipating a possible objection, namely that the Roman people achieved the right goal by chance, not by right.

³⁰ Aristotle details the ways in which a true conclusion can be drawn from false premisses in *Prior Analytics* 2, 2–4. Such conclusions are true in respect of the fact, not the reason.

³¹ The parallel between the procedures involved in taking action and in arguing logically to a conclusion had already been spelled out in *Mon.* I, xiv, 7.

³² This same example of theft and alms-giving is used by Aquinas to illustrate the point in his commentary on this passage of the *Ethics*, see n. 28.

only the relationship of the members to one another which is taken into account by the founder, but also their capacity to exercise office; and this is to take into account the limits of right within the collegiate body, that is to say in the way it is structured; for right does not extend beyond the capacity to exercise it. Now nature is
 3 no less provident than this in its ordering of things.¹ From this it is clear that nature orders things according to their capacities, and this taking into account of their capacities is the basis of right established by nature in the created world.² From this it follows that the natural order in the created world cannot be maintained without right, since the basis of right is inseparably bound up with that order: the preservation of that order is therefore necessarily right.
 4 The Roman people were ordained by nature to rule; and this can be shown as follows: just as a craftsman would never achieve artistic perfection if he aimed only at the final form and paid no heed to the means by which that form was to be achieved, so too nature would fail if it aimed only at the universal form of divine likeness in the universe, yet neglected the means to achieve it; but nature is never less than perfect, since it is the work of divine intelligence:³ therefore it wills all the means through which it achieves the fulfil-
 5 ling of its intention. Since therefore the goal of the human race is itself a necessary means to achieving the universal goal of nature, it is necessary that nature wills it. For this reason Aristotle in the second book of the *Physics*⁴ rightly shows that nature always acts
 6 with an end in view. And since nature cannot achieve this end by means of one person alone, since there are many functions necessarily involved in it, and these functions require a vast number of people to carry them out, it is necessary for nature to produce a vast number of people fitted to different functions:⁵ as well as celestial influences, the qualities and characteristics of regions here below

¹ In human institutions the power conferred on an individual elected to office will reflect that person's abilities; in the natural world power and aptitude are correlated in the same way, for it is unthinkable that nature should be less careful in its provisions than human beings.

² See *Mon.* II, II, n. 5.

³ Cf. *Mon.* II, II, 3.

⁴ *Physics* 2, 2 194a 28-31.

⁵ The need for human diversity of which Aristotle speaks as a practical social and political necessity is here given a teleological explanation.

on earth make a large contribution to this.⁶ This is why we see that , not just certain individuals, but certain peoples are born fitted to rule, and certain others to be ruled and to serve, as Aristotle affirms in the *Politics*;⁷ and, as he says, it is not only expedient but actually just that such people should be ruled, even if force has to be used to bring this about. If this is the way things are, there is no doubt 8 that nature ordained a place and a nation to exercise universal rule in the world: otherwise she would have failed in her provisions, which is impossible. From what has been said above and what will be said below it is clear enough which place that was and which nation: it was Rome and her citizens, that is to say her people. Our 9 poet too touched on this perceptively in his sixth book, when he introduces Anchises making this prophetic prediction to Aeneas, the father of the Romans:

That others shall beat out the breathing bronze
 More delicately, I can well believe,
 And draw forth living features from the marble,
 Plead causes better, trace movements of the heavens
 With pointers, tell the rising of the stars.
 Roman, remember to rule over nations.
 Your arts shall be: to impose the ways of peace,
 Spare subject peoples, and subdue the proud.⁸

He touches on the location of the place perceptively in the fourth 10 book, when he introduces Jove speaking of Aeneas to Mercury in this manner:

Not such a son did his fair mother promise,
 Nor for this saved him twice from Grecian arms;
 But that he might rule over Italy,
 Pregnant with empire, clamouring for war.⁹

These arguments are sufficient to convince us that the Roman 11 people were ordained by nature to rule; therefore the Roman people by conquering the world came to empire by right.

⁶ On the influence of geography on human diversification, cf. *Mon.* I, xiv, 6; on the influence of astronomy, see Boyde, *Dante Philomythes*, p. 255.

⁷ *Politics* I, 5 1254a 21-3; 1255a 1-2; 6 1255b 5-9 (though Aristotle is talking about individuals rather than races or nations).

⁸ *Aeneid* VI, 847-53.

⁹ *ibid.* IV, 227-30.

In order to get a secure grasp of the truth of our question it must moreover be borne in mind that divine judgment in earthly affairs is sometimes revealed to men, and sometimes it remains hidden.

2 Now there are two ways in which it can be revealed, i.e. by reason and by faith. For there are some judgments of God which human reason can arrive at by its own unaided efforts, such as this: that a man should sacrifice himself to save his country; for if the part should put itself at risk for the sake of the whole, then since man is a part of his community, as Aristotle says in the *Politics*,¹ then a man should sacrifice himself for his country, as a lesser good for a

3 greater. And so Aristotle says in the *Ethics*: 'though it is worthwhile to attain the good merely for one man, it is finer and more godlike to attain it for a people or a community'.² And this is God's judgment; otherwise human reason in its right judgment would not be in har-

4 mony with nature's intention, which is impossible. Then there are some judgments of God to which human reason, even if it cannot arrive at them by its own unaided efforts, can nonetheless be raised with the help of faith in those things which are said to us in the Scriptures; such as this: that no one can be saved without faith (assuming that he has never heard anything of Christ), no matter how perfectly endowed he might be in the moral and intellectual

5 virtues³ in respect both of his character and his behaviour. For human reason cannot see this to be just by its own powers, but with the aid of faith it can. For it is written to the *Hebrews*: 'It is impossible to please God without faith';⁴ and in *Leviticus*: 'Any man of the house of Israel who shall kill an ox or lamb or goat in the camp or outside the camp, and shall not bring it to the door of the

6 tabernacle as an offering to the Lord, shall be guilty of blood.'⁵ The door of the tabernacle is a figure of Christ, who is the doorway to the eternal assembly, as can be gathered from the Gospel; the killing

¹ *Politics* 1, 2 1253a 25-39.

² *Ethics* 1, 2 1094b 9-11.

³ The distinction between the moral and intellectual virtues is made by Aristotle, *Ethics* 1, 13 1103a 4-10: the moral virtues are analysed in Books 2-5, the intellectual virtues in Book 6.

⁴ *Hebrews* 11, 6.

⁵ *Leviticus* 17, 3.

of animals symbolizes human actions.⁶ But that judgment of God 7 is hidden which human reason arrives at neither through the law of nature, nor the law of the scriptures, but occasionally by special grace. This can happen in several ways, sometimes by direct revelation, and sometimes being revealed through some kind of putting-to-the-test. There are two ways in which it can happen by direct 8 revelation: either by a spontaneous act of God, or by God in response to prayer.⁷ By a spontaneous act of God there are two ways: either openly or through a sign; openly, as when the judgment against Saul was revealed to Samuel,⁸ by a sign, as when what God willed regarding the liberation of the children of Israel was revealed to Pharaoh through a sign.⁹ It can be a response to prayer, as they knew who said in the second book of *Chronicles*: 'When we do not know what we should do, this course alone is left us: that we should turn our eyes to Thee.'¹⁰ There are two ways in which it can be 9 revealed through a putting-to-the-test: either by lot or through a contest; for the word *certare* ('to decide something by a contest') derives from *certum facere* ('to make certain').¹¹ God's judgment is sometimes revealed to men by lot, as in the substitution of Matthias in the *Acts of the Apostles*.¹² God's judgment can be revealed by a contest in two ways: either by a clash of strength, as happens in combat between two champions, who are called prize-fighters, or through competition among a number of people who vie with one another to reach an agreed goal, as happens in a race between athletes competing to reach the finishing-line first. The first of these 10 ways was prefigured among the pagans in that famous fight between Hercules and Antaeus, which Lucan recalls in the fourth book of

⁶ Commentators have not identified a source for the figural interpretation of this passage from *Leviticus*, which may well be Dante's own; on Christ as *ostium* cf. John 10, 9 [*ego sum ostium; per me si quis introierit salvabitur*, 'I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved'].

⁷ The distinctions are sketched here with extreme conciseness, almost as a series of notes with illustrative examples, the point being to clarify the two particular forms of revelation which Dante will invite us to recognize as operating in the course of Roman history.

⁸ 1 Regum 15 (AV 1 Samuel).

⁹ Exodus 7.

¹⁰ 2 Chronicles 20, 12.

¹¹ The etymology Dante gives is false (*certus* comes from *cerno*, not *certo*).

¹² Acts 1, 26. Matthias was chosen to take the place of Judas among the apostles by drawing lots.

- the *Pharsalia*¹³ and Ovid in the ninth book of the *Metamorphoses*;¹⁴ the second was prefigured among those same pagans by the race between Atalanta and Hippomene in the tenth book of the *Metamorphoses*.¹⁵ Nor should we overlook the fact that in these two kinds of contest different rules apply: in the first the contestants can obstruct each other quite legitimately (for instance prize-fighters), whereas in the second this is not allowed; for runners must not obstruct one another – although our poet seems to have thought differently in his fifth book, when he had Eurialus win the prize.¹⁶
- 12 So that Cicero did better to forbid this, in the third book of the *De officiis*, following the opinion of Chrysippus; for he says as follows: ‘With his customary aptness Chrysippus says: “When a man races in the arena he must exert himself and strive his hardest to win; he must not in any way obstruct his fellow-competitor.”’¹⁷
- 13 Having made these distinctions in this chapter, we can take two lines of argument which serve our purpose: one from the competition between runners, the other from the contest between prize-fighters. I shall develop these arguments in the chapters which now directly follow.¹⁸

viii

Thus that people who won the race to rule the world against all competition did so by divine decree. For since the resolving of a universal dispute is of greater concern to God than the resolving of a limited dispute, and in some limited disputes we seek to know divine judgment through champions, as the well-worn proverb says: ‘May Peter bless the man to whom God gives

¹³ *Pharsalia* 4, 593–655.

¹⁴ *Metamorphoses* 9, 183f.

¹⁵ *ibid.* 10, 560f.

¹⁶ *Aeneid* v, 334f. Eurialus won because his friend Nisus obstructed his rival Salius in the race.

¹⁷ *De officiis* 3, 10, 42. Dante is again perhaps quoting from memory, since the quotation is incomplete, omitting the reference to obstruction by hand [*aut manu depellere*] of the original.

¹⁸ The next two chapters, which develop the notions of the race (ch. viii) and trial by combat [*duellum*] (ch. ix) in relation to the Roman empire’s struggle for supremacy, are those which modern readers find most disconcerting. A spirited defence of Dante is offered by Nardi in his commentary to chapter viii and by Vinay at chapter ix.

victory’, there is no doubt that the victory among those competing in the race for world domination was won in accordance with God’s judgment. The Roman people won the race to rule the world against all competition. This will be clear if, when we consider the competitors, we also consider the prize or finishing-post. The prize or finishing-post was to rule over all mortals: this is what we mean by ‘empire’. But none achieved this except the Roman people; they were not only the first, but indeed the only ones to reach the finishing-post in the contest, as will appear directly. For the first among mortals who strove to win this prize was Ninus, king of the Assyrians. Although, as Orosius relates,¹ he tried for ninety years and more with his consort Semiramis to conquer the world by force, and subjected all of Asia to himself, nonetheless the eastern parts of the world were never under their rule. Ovid recalled them both in his fourth book, where he says in the Pyramus episode:

Semiramis circled the city with walls of brick;²

and later on:

They were

To meet at the tomb of Ninus and hide in the shade.³

The second who aspired to this prize was Vesoges, king of Egypt; 5 and although he pillaged southern and northern Asia, as Orosius recalls,⁴ yet he never conquered even half the world; for he was turned aside from his reckless undertaking by the Scythians, midway as it were between the starters⁵ and the finishing-post. Then Cyrus, king of the Persians, attempted the same thing. Having 6 destroyed Babylon and transferred the Babylonian empire to the Persians, he laid down his life and along with it his ambition under Tamiris, queen of the Scythians, without ever even reaching the lands to the west.⁶ After these Xerxes, son of Darius and king of 7 the Persians, invaded the world with such a vast number of peoples

¹ *Hist.* 1, 4.

² *Metamorphoses* iv, 58.

³ *ibid.* iv, 88.

⁴ *Hist.* 1, 14.

⁵ i.e. the race officials who give the athletes the starting signal.

⁶ *Hist.* 2, 6–7.

and with such military might that he was able to bridge the strait which separates Asia from Europe, between Sestos and Abidos. Lucan recalls this astonishing achievement in the second book of the *Pharsalia*; for he says there:

Fame sings that proud Xerxes
built such paths across the seas.⁷

But in the end, ignominiously driven back from what he had set out to do, he was unable to win the prize. In addition to these, and after them, Alexander king of Macedon came closer than anyone else to winning the prize of monarchy. Livy relates that as he was urging the Romans to surrender through his ambassadors, he collapsed in Egypt before receiving a reply from the Romans, in the middle of the race so to speak.⁸ Lucan bears witness to his tomb being there in Egypt, when he says in his eighth book, inveighing against Ptolemy king of Egypt:

Last doomed and degenerate descendant
Of the line of Lagus, you who must surrender
The sceptre to your own incestuous sister,
Even though the Macedonian is preserved
In a consecrated cave.⁹

¹⁰ 'O depth of the riches both of the knowledge and wisdom of God',¹⁰ who is not astonished at you in this connection? For you carried off Alexander from the contest when he was striving to obstruct his Roman rival in the race, so that his foolhardiness might proceed no further.

¹¹ But that Rome won the prize in this great contest is confirmed by many testimonies. For our poet says in his first book:

Surely you promised that from them some time,
With passing years, the Romans were to come;

⁷ *Pharsalia* II, 672-3; see also *Hist.* 2, 9-10.

⁸ *Ab urbe condita* 9, 17f. Livy does not in fact say that Alexander died in Egypt. Orosius, *Hist.* 3, 16-20, uses the metaphor of the race à propos of Alexander's failure to fulfil his ambition ('when, as it were, he had driven his chariot around the turning post'), but says correctly that he died in Babylon. Davis (p. 103) points out, following Nardi, that only Dante speaks of failure (rather than of a transfer of power) in relation to earlier attempts at global domination.

⁹ *Pharsalia* VIII, 692-4.

¹⁰ *Romans* II, 33.

From Teucer's line restored leaders should come
To hold the sea and all lands in their sway.¹¹

And Lucan in his first book:

12

The kingdom is divided by the sword;
The destiny of the imperial people
Who rule the sea and lands and the whole world
Found no place for two men.¹²

And Boethius in his second book, when speaking of the prince of the Romans, says:

The empire that he held in sway
From eastern sun's rise then was spread
To where he sinks at close of day.
Its northern march where the two Bears stand,
Its southern bounds where the parched south wind
Burns and bakes the arid sand.¹³

Christ's chronicler Luke, who always speaks the truth, bears witness to this also, in the passage where he tells us: 'There went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed';¹⁴ in these words we can clearly perceive that at that time the Romans exercised jurisdiction over the whole world. From all of this it is clear that the Roman people won the race against all its rivals competing for world domination; therefore they won by divine judgment, and consequently they obtained it by divine judgment; which means they obtained it by right.

ix

Furthermore whatever is acquired through trial by combat¹ is acquired by right. For wherever human judgment is unequal to the

¹¹ *Aeneid* I, 234-6.

¹² *Pharsalia* I, 109-11.

¹³ *De consolazione philosophiae* 2, metr. 6, 8-13.

¹⁴ Luke 2, 1.

¹ 'Trial by combat' seems the least unsatisfactory rendering of *duellum* in English, although it loses the etymological connection with 'two' (*duo*) to which Dante draws attention in par. 2; 'trial by champion' would be the appropriate translation if the encounter were always between individuals, but Dante uses the word to refer also to combat between two teams and two armies. The parties in conflict meet in combat having agreed that the outcome will be considered binding by both sides as representing the will of heaven. Dante goes on to explain (par. 4)

task, whether because it is wrapped in the darkness of ignorance or because no judge is available to preside, then to ensure that justice is not left abandoned we must have recourse to Him who so loved justice that, dying, he met its demands with his own blood; whence the psalm: 'The Lord is just and has loved just things.'² Now this happens when by free agreement of both sides, not out of hatred, nor out of love, but solely out of a passionate concern for justice, we seek to know divine judgment through a clash of strength of both body and soul; we call this clash of strength trial by combat (*duellum*) because originally it was devised as combat between two (duo) individuals. But just as in warfare all ways of reaching a resolution through negotiation must be tried first and only as a last resort do we engage in battle (and Cicero and Vegetius are in agreement in urging this, in the *De officiis*³ and the *De re militari*⁴ respectively); and just as in medical treatment everything must be tried before the knife and fire⁵ and these are to be used as a last resort; in the same way care must always be taken to ensure that, when all other ways have first been investigated as a way of resolving the dispute, we have recourse to this remedy as a last resort, forced to adopt it as it were by a need for justice. There are thus two identifying features of trial by combat: the first is the one we have just described; the other is the one we touched on earlier, i.e. that the contenders or champions enter the arena by mutual agreement, and not out of hatred, nor out of love, but solely out of a passionate concern for justice. And that is why Cicero spoke wisely when he touched on this subject, for what he said was: 'But wars aimed at securing the crown of empire should be waged less harshly.'⁶ For

that two necessary conditions must be fulfilled if it is to be a true *duellum*: it must be a solution of last resort, all other attempts to resolve the dispute having failed; and the motive of the contenders must be solely a passionate concern for justice. F. Patetta, *Le ordalie*, Torino 1890, traces the history of the *duellum* and the other types of ordeal used to ascertain God's judgment [*iudicium Dei*] from earliest times to the late Middle Ages; see also G. Neilson, *Trial by Combat*, Glasgow 1890.

² Psalms 10, 8 (AV 11, 7).

³ *De officiis* 1, 11, 34.

⁴ *De re militari* 3, 9.

⁵ i.e. surgery and cauterization.

⁶ *De officiis* 1, 12, 38. Dante appears to be citing from memory again, as the word used by Cicero is not crown [*corona*] but glory [*gloria*]. The meaning is essentially the same, but it is perhaps significant that *corona* allows Dante to make a connection with the biblical 'crown of righteousness' [*corona iustitiae*] referred to in par. 19.

if these essential conditions of trial by combat have been respected – and if they have not it would not be trial by combat – is it not true that those who out of a need for justice have come to confront one another by mutual agreement through a passionate concern for justice have come to confront one another in the name of God? And if so, is not God in their midst, since he himself promises us as much in the Gospel?⁷ And if God is present, is it not impious to think that justice can fail to triumph – that justice which he himself so loves, as we noted above? And if justice cannot fail to triumph in trial by combat, is it not true that what is acquired through trial by combat is acquired by right? Even the pagans, before the trumpet of the Gospel sounded, acknowledged the truth of this when they sought a judgment in the outcome of trial by combat. And so the great Pyrrhus, who was noble by reason both of the customs of the Aeacidae⁸ and of blood, gave a worthy answer when the Roman ambassadors were sent to him to ransom prisoners:

I ask no gold, nor shall you give me payment;
Let us decide by the sword, and not with gold,
As warriors, not traffickers in war,
The matter of life and death on either side.
Let us test by our valour if Hera wants
That you should rule or I, and what fate brings.
Doubt not I shall restore to liberty
Those whom fortune of war spared for their valour.
I give them; take them.⁹

Here Pyrrhus called fortune 'Hera'; we call that same cause by the more appropriate and accurate name 'divine providence'. So let champions beware that they do not make money their motive for fighting; for then it should not be called trial by combat, but a market-place of blood and justice; nor should it be thought that God is then present as arbiter, but that ancient Adversary who stirred up the quarrel. If they wish to be true champions, and not traffickers in blood and justice, then as they enter the arena let them always have Pyrrhus before their eyes, Pyrrhus who when fighting

⁷ Cf. Matthew 18, 20 (but the biblical context is very different).

⁸ The Aeacidae are the descendants of Aeacus, of whom Pyrrhus claimed to be one. Aeacus was a man of great integrity, the son of Jupiter by Aegina.

⁹ These lines come from Ennius, *Annales* vi, and are quoted by Cicero in *De officiis* 1, 12, 38. Again there are textual differences from modern editions.



11 for supremacy disdained gold in the manner described. And if the usual objection should be urged against the truth I have shown (that opponents may be unevenly matched in strength), let the objection be refuted by the victory of David over Goliath;¹⁰ and if the pagans want a different example, let them refute it by the victory of Hercules against Antaeus.¹¹ For it is very foolish to suppose that strength sustained by God in a champion might be unequal to the

win by trial
↳ win by right task.

12 By now it is sufficiently clear that what is won through trial by combat is won by right. But the Roman people acquired the empire through trial by combat; and this is confirmed by trustworthy testimony. In detailing this testimony, not only will this point become clear, but it will also be apparent that from the very beginnings of the Roman empire any matter of dispute was decided by trial by

Romans
won by trial
↳ Romans won
by trial

13 combat. For at the very beginning, when a dispute arose about the abode of father Aeneas, who was the first father of the Roman people, and Turnus king of the Rutuli opposed him, in the end, in order to seek out what was God's will, the two kings agreed to fight in single combat, as is related at the end of the *Aeneid*.¹² [In this

Aeneas

14 combat the clemency of the victor Aeneas was so great that, had he not caught sight of the belt which Turnus had taken from Pallas when he killed him, the victor would have granted life as well as peace to the vanquished, as our poet's closing lines testify.¹³ When two peoples had sprung up in Italy from that same Trojan root, i.e. the Romans and the Albans,¹⁴ and a conflict had raged between them for a long time about the eagle standard and the other household gods of Troy and the honour of supremacy, in the end, by mutual agreement, in order to reach a just settlement the matter was fought out by three Horatii brothers on one side and the same number of Curiatii brothers on the other, in the presence of the kings and the peoples waiting on either side. When the three champions of the Albans and two of the Romans had been killed, the

Aen /
&
clemency

¹⁰ 1 Regum 17, 4-51 (AV 1 Samuel).

¹¹ See for example the account in *Pharsalia* iv, 593-653.

¹² *Aeneid* xii, 693-938. The word *duellum* is not used by Virgil, but both sides agree to abide by the outcome of the single combat between their leaders.

¹³ *ibid.* xii, 938-52.

¹⁴ Alba Longa was founded by Ascanius, the son of Aeneas. From the point of view of the Romans the household gods of the Alban families are, by descent, the 'other' household gods of Troy.

prize of victory passed to the Romans under king Hostilius. And Livy wrote a meticulous account of this episode in his first book,¹⁵ and Orosius too confirms it.¹⁶ Livy tells how later, respecting all the rules of warfare, they fought for supremacy with the neighbouring peoples, with the Sabines and the Samnites, in the manner of a trial by combat (even though there was a vast number of combatants); and in this way of fighting with the Samnites Fortune almost repented, so to speak, of her undertaking. And Lucan reports this by way of example in his second book in these words:

What heaps of slain lay at the Colline Gate
When the world capital and its government
Was nearly transferred to a different seat,
And the Samnite hoped for a heavier blow to Rome
Than the Caudine Forks.¹⁷

But after the disputes between Italians had been resolved, and there had as yet been no confrontation to ascertain divine judgment with the Greeks and with the Carthaginians (both of whom were striving for Empire), Fabritius fought for the Romans and Pyrrhus for the Greeks along with a vast number of soldiers for the glory of supremacy, and Rome won; and Scipio for the Italians and Hannibal for the Africans fought a war in the form of trial by combat, and the Africans were beaten by the Italians, as Livy and all Roman historians are at pains to relate.¹⁸ Who then is now so obtuse as not to see that the glorious people gained the crown of the whole world by right through trial by combat? A Roman could truly have said with the Apostle to Timothy: 'There is laid up for me a crown of righteousness';¹⁹ 'laid up', that is, in God's eternal providence. Now let the presumptuous jurists see just how far they are below that watch-tower²⁰ of reason from which the human mind contemplates

¹⁵ *Ab urbe condita* 1, 24-6. Livy describes at length the formal agreement between the two sides that the outcome of the combat would be binding.

¹⁶ *Hist.* 2, 4. Orosius gives no details.

¹⁷ *Pharsalia* 2, 135-8. The Caudine Forks was a humiliating Roman defeat at the hands of the Samnites in 321 BC; the defeat of the Samnites at the Colline Gate in 82 BC was definitive.

¹⁸ The Second Punic War is described by Livy in Books 21-30 of *Ab urbe condita*; cf. *Aeneid* vi, 842-4.

¹⁹ 2 Timothy 4, 8.

²⁰ Cf. Boethius, *De consolazione philosophiae* 4, 6, who talks of the watch-tower of providence [*ex alta providentiae specula*] in just that section of the work which the

these principles, and let them be silent and be satisfied to give counsel and judgment in accordance with the sense of the law.²¹

- 21 And it is already clear that the Roman people acquired the empire through trial by combat; therefore it acquired it by right; which is our main thesis in this present book.

X

Up to this point our thesis has been proved by arguments which are mainly based on rational principles; but now it must be proved again from the principles of the Christian faith. For it is those who style themselves ardent defenders of the Christian faith who most of all have 'ragged' and 'meditated vain things' against Roman authority; they have no pity for Christ's poor, who are not only defrauded of the revenues of the churches, but whose very patrimony¹ is daily stolen; and the Church grows poor while they, making a pretence of justice, shut out the dispenser of justice.² But this impoverishment of the Church does not happen without God's judgment, since her resources are not used to help the poor (whose patrimony the Church's wealth is), and since no gratitude is shown for receiving them from the empire which offers them. Let them return where they came from: they came well, they return badly, since they were given in good faith and badly held. What does this matter to such shepherds? What do they care if the Church's substance is wasted, as long as the wealth of their own relatives increases? But perhaps it is better to return to our thesis, and wait in reverent silence for help from our Saviour.

- 4 I say therefore that if the Roman empire was not based on right, Christ by his birth assented to an injustice; the consequent is false; therefore the contradictory of the antecedent is true. For contradictory statements are mutually exclusive: if one is false, the other

opening of this second book calls to mind (see II, i, n. 2). Orosius, *Hist.* I, 1, talks of surveying history from a watch-tower in order to gain perspective on historical events and take in broad patterns of significance ('viewing them as if from a watchtower, I shall present the conflicts of the human race'): precisely what Dante has done in Book II, and what the presumptuous jurists he here calls to account fail to do.

²¹ i.e. without presuming to judge in areas outside their competence.

¹ Cf. *Mon.* III, x, 16-17.

² i.e. the monarch or emperor.

must be true.³ There is no need to demonstrate to believers that the consequent is false, for if someone is a believer, he allows that this is false; if he does not allow it, he is not a believer, and if he is not a believer, this argument is not for him. I show the relationship of consequentiality⁴ as follows: anyone who of his own free will complies with an edict, acknowledges by his action that the edict is legitimate, and, since actions are more telling than words, as Aristotle says at the end of the *Ethics*,⁵ he does so more effectively than if he gave it his verbal approval. But as his chronicler Luke relates,⁶ Christ chose to be born of his Virgin Mother under an edict emanating from Roman authority, so that the Son of God made man might be enrolled as a man in that unique census of the human race; this means that he acknowledged the validity of that edict.⁷ And perhaps it is more holy to believe that the edict came by divine inspiration through Caesar, so that he who had been so long awaited in the society of men might himself be enrolled among mortals. Therefore Christ acknowledged by his action that the edict of Augustus, who embodied the authority of the Romans, was legitimate. And since someone who issues an edict legitimately must logically have the jurisdiction to do so, it necessarily follows that

³ Dante makes this logical point in slightly more technical language, literally 'contradictory statements can be inferred from one another by virtue of having exactly opposite meanings' (thus by implication if one is false, the other must be true); cf. *Summule*, p. 7 [*Lex contradictoriarum est quod si una est vera, reliqua est falsa, et e converso; in nulla enim materia possunt simul esse vere vel false*].

⁴ i.e. show that the relationship of antecedent to consequent exists between the two statements (If A, then B; if not B, then not A); see II, v, nn. 26 and 27. On the 'relationship of consequentiality' [*consequentia*] see *Summule*, p. 169 [*Consequentia econtrario est quando ex opposito consequentis sequitur oppositum antecedentis. Ut 'si est homo est animal; ergo si est non-animal, est non-homo'; hic enim ex opposito consequentis, scilicet 'non-animal', sequitur oppositum antecedentis, scilicet 'non-homo'. In contradictoriis autem non potest esse consequentia nisi econtrario*].

⁵ *Ethics* 10, I 1172a 34-5 (and cf. *Mon.* I, xiii, 4).

⁶ Luke 2, 1.

⁷ Orosius emphasizes the crucial significance of Christ's choice to be enrolled in the census as a man (*Hist.* 6, 22): 'This is that earliest and most famous acknowledgment which designated Caesar first of all men and the Romans lords of the world; for in the census list all men were entered individually, and in it the very Maker of all men wished to be found and enrolled as a man among men. . . Neither is there any doubt that . . . it was by the will of our Lord Jesus Christ that this city prospered, was protected, and brought to such heights of power, since to her, in preference to all others, He chose to belong when He came, thereby making it certain that He was entitled to be called a Roman citizen according to the declaration made in the Roman census list.'

someone who acknowledges that an edict is legitimate is also acknowledging that the jurisdiction of the authority which promulgated it is legitimate; because if it were not based on right, it would not be legitimate. And note that our argument, which is based on denying the consequent, although valid in its form by virtue of a common-place,⁸ yet reveals its full force as a second figure syllogism, if it is then reduced to the first figure as an argument based on affirming the consequent.⁹ This reduction runs as follows: all injustice is assented to unjustly; Christ did not assent unjustly; therefore he did not assent to an injustice. Affirming the consequent, we get: all injustice is assented to unjustly; Christ assented to an injustice; therefore he assented unjustly.

xi

And if the Roman empire was not based on right, Adam's sin was not punished in Christ; but this is false; therefore the contradictory of the proposition from which it follows is true.¹ That the consequent is false can be demonstrated as follows: since by Adam's sin we were all sinners, in the words of the Apostle 'As by one man sin entered this world, and through sin, death, so death entered into all men, in as much as all sinned';² if satisfaction for that sin had not been made by the death of Christ, we would still be 'the children of wrath by nature',³ that is by our corrupted nature. But

⁸ The common-place [*locus*] referred to here is no. 31 in *Summule, Tractatus quintus, De locis*, p. 73 [*Maxima: si unum contradictorie oppositorum est verum, reliquum est falsum, et e converso*].

⁹ The argument so far developed is based on the logical commonplace that contradictory statements cannot both be true (par. 4) and on the self-evident falsehood of the consequent ('Christ by his birth assented to an injustice') for any believer (pars. 4-5). Dante now offers a pair of syllogisms which reveal the 'full force' of his argument by showing that, if the consequent were to be accepted as true, then the conclusion would be not just that Christ assented to 'an injustice', but that he assented 'unjustly', i.e. a partial and limited claim would be replaced by one which is total and absolute, and therefore even more shockingly blasphemous to a believer. The text and meaning of these last two paragraphs are discussed in P. Shaw, 'Some Proposed Emendations to the Text of Dante's *Monarchia*', in *Italian Studies* 50, 1995, pp. 1-8.

¹ The form of the argument exactly parallels II, x, 4 (see n. 3), the underlying principle again being that of a pair of contradictories, if one is true, the other must be false; see Aristotle, *De interpretatione* 6-7.

² Romans 5, 12.

³ Cf. Ephesians 2, 3.

this is not the case, since the Apostle speaking of the Father in *Ephesians* says: 'He has predestined us, according to the determination of his will, to be adopted as his children through Jesus Christ unto him, to the praise and glory of his grace, with which he favoured us in his beloved son, in whom we have redemption, by his blood, remission of sins in accordance with the riches of his glory which is superabundant in us';⁴ and since Christ himself, suffering punishment in his own person, says in *John*: 'It is finished';⁵ for where something is finished, nothing remains to be done. As regards the relationship of consequentiality, it must be borne in mind that 'punishment' is not simply 'a penalty imposed on one who does wrong', but 'a penalty imposed on the wrong-doer by one who has the legal authority to punish him'; so that if the penalty is not imposed by an authorized judge, it is not a 'punishment', but is more accurately termed a 'wrong'. Hence the man said to Moses: 'Who appointed you judge over us?'⁶ Thus if Christ had not suffered under an authorized judge, that penalty would not have been a punishment. And no judge could be authorized unless he had jurisdiction over the whole of mankind, since the whole of mankind was punished in that flesh of Christ 'who bore our sorrows', as the prophet says.⁷ And Tiberius Caesar, whose representative Pilate was, would not have had jurisdiction over the whole of mankind unless the Roman empire had existed by right. This is why Herod, although he did not know what he was doing (any more than Caiaphas did when he spoke the truth by heavenly decree) sent Christ back to Pilate to be judged, as Luke relates in his Gospel.⁸ For Herod did not act as Tiberius' representative invested with the authority of the eagle or the authority of the senate,⁹ rather he governed as the king appointed by him over a particular kingdom, and invested with the authority of the kingdom which had been entrusted to him. So let those who pass themselves off as sons of the church stop attacking the Roman empire, seeing that Christ the bridegroom sanctioned it in this way at the beginning and at the

⁴ Ephesians 1, 5-8.

⁵ John 19, 30; cf. Matthew 27, 50. These are Christ's last words on the cross.

⁶ Exodus 2, 14.

⁷ Isaiah 53, 4.

⁸ Luke 23, 11.

⁹ i.e. he was not invested with the authority of the empire and of Rome, but only with local jurisdiction.

but Dante
of Guy:
Pilate
does not
think
there
is a
crime
(crowd
condemns)

Judas

Monarchy

end of his earthly campaign.¹⁰ And I consider it now sufficiently proven that the Roman people took over the empire of the world by right.

8 O happy people, O glorious Ausonia,¹¹ if only that man who weakened your empire had never been born, or at least had never been led astray by his own pious intentions.¹²

¹⁰ i.e. at the beginning and end of his life.

¹¹ i.e. Italy.

¹² An oblique if impassioned reference to the donation of Constantine, a theme which will be developed at length in III, x (see n. 1). There is a clear parallel with the close of Book I: just as that book in its final chapter had spoken of Christ's birth, so now Book II in its final chapter speaks of Christ's death – the key events in human history which legitimize the Roman empire. There may be a deliberate echo here of Christ's words about Judas at the last supper, as reported in Matthew 26, 24 [*Bonum erat ei si natus non fuisset homo ille*, 'It would have been better for that man not to have been born'].

Book Three

i

'He shut the lions' mouths, and they did not harm me, for in his sight righteousness was found in me.'¹

At the beginning of this work it was proposed to inquire into three questions, within the limits allowed by the subject-matter; the first two of them have been dealt with sufficiently, I believe, in the previous books. Now it remains to deal with the third, the truth of which cannot be brought to light without putting certain people to shame, and will therefore perhaps be a cause of some resentment against me. But since truth from its unchangeable throne implores us, and Solomon too, entering the forest of *Proverbs*,² teaches us by his own example to meditate on truth and loathe wickedness; and since our authority on morals, Aristotle, urges us to destroy what touches us closely for the sake of maintaining truth;³ then having taken heart from the words of Daniel cited above, in which divine power is said to be a shield of the defenders of truth, and putting on 'the breast-plate of faith' as Paul exhorts us,⁴ afire with that burning coal which one of the seraphim took from the heavenly altar to touch Isaiah's lips,⁵ I shall enter the present arena, and, by his arm who freed us from the power of darkness⁶ with his blood,

¹ Daniel 6, 22.

² Proverbs 8, 7.

³ *Ethics* 1, 6 1096a 13–15.

⁴ 1 Thessalonians 5, 8.

⁵ Isaiah 6, 6–7.

⁶ Cf. Colossians 1, 13.

before the eyes of the world I shall cast out the wicked and the
 4 lying from the ring. What should I fear, when the Spirit who is
 coeternal with the Father and the Son says through the mouth of
 David: 'the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance and shall
 not be afraid of ill report'.⁷

5 The present question, therefore, which we are now to investigate,
 concerns the 'two great lights',⁸ that is the Roman Pope and the
 Roman Prince; and the point at issue is whether the authority of
 the Roman monarch, who is monarch of the world by right, as was
 proved in the second book, derives directly from God or else from
 some vicar or minister of God, by which I mean Peter's successor,
 who assuredly holds the keys to the kingdom of heaven.

ii

In order to investigate this question, some principle must be
 adopted (just as it was with the previous ones¹) on whose validity
 the arguments designed to reveal the truth can be based; for without
 an agreed principle what point is there in striving, even though one
 speaks the truth, since only such a principle provides a basis for
 2 the middle terms to be adopted? So let this inviolable truth be
 formulated at the outset: what is contrary to nature's intention is
 against God's will. For if this were not true, its contradictory would
 not be false, i.e. what is contrary to nature's intention is not against
 3 God's will. And if this is not false, nor are those things which
 follow from it;² for it is impossible in necessary consequences for
 4 the consequent to be false without the antecedent being false.³ But

⁷ Psalms 111, 7 (AV 112, 6-7). The phrase *ab auditione mala* is translated in the
 AV and the *New Revised Standard Version* '(afraid) of evil tidings', but Dante
 clearly understands the phrase to mean being spoken ill of by others.

⁸ Genesis 1, 16.

¹ Cf. I, ii and II, ii: the three books are exactly parallel in structure.

² Having stated his principle (par. 2), Dante demonstrates its truth (by default, as
 it were) by showing that patently absurd consequences would follow if its opposite
 were true. This is known as a proof *per impossibile*, see Aristotle, *Prior Analytics*
 I, 23 41a 21-5; 2, 11-14. The underlying assumption is again that of two strict
 opposites, if one is true, the other must be false: teasing out the consequences of
 the *contradictorium* occupies the rest of the chapter, whose concluding sentence
 summarizes the procedure.

³ The relationship between antecedent and consequent is a *necessary* one: if man,
 then (necessarily, by definition) animal; hence if not animal, then (of necessity)
 not man, see II, v, notes 26 and 27.

one of two things must necessarily follow if a thing is not against
 one's will: one must either will it or not will it; just as, if one does
 not hate something, it necessarily follows that one either loves it or
 does not love it; for not loving is not the same as hating, and the
 fact that one does not will something is not the same as its being
 against one's will, as is self-evident. If these conclusions are not
 false, this will not be false either: 'God wills what he does not will';
 and nothing could be more false than this. I prove the truth of this 5
 affirmation⁴ as follows: it is obvious that God wills the goal of
 nature, otherwise he would move the heavens to no purpose – not
 a tenable proposition. If God willed the obstructing of nature's goal,
 he would also will the goal of that obstructing, for otherwise he
 would once again will to no effect; and since the aim of an obstruc-
 tion is to prevent what is obstructed from happening, it would
 follow that God willed that nature should not fulfil its goal – which
 he is said to will. But if God did not will the obstructing of nature's 6
 goal, inasmuch as he did not will it, it would follow logically from
 his not willing that he was indifferent to whether the obstructing
 took place or did not take place; but one who is indifferent to an
 obstruction is indifferent to the thing which can be obstructed, and
 therefore does not have it in his will; and what someone does not
 have in his will, he does not will. Therefore if the goal of nature 7
 can be obstructed – which it can – it necessarily follows that God
 does not will the goal of nature; and thus our earlier conclusion
 follows, namely that God wills what he does not will. That principle
 from whose contradictory such absurd consequences follow is there-
 fore unquestionably true.

iii

By way of preamble it should be noted that the truth of the first
 question needed to be demonstrated more in order to eliminate
 ignorance than to resolve a dispute; but the truth of the second
 question addressed ignorance and dispute in almost equal measure,
 for there are many things we do not know about which we do not

⁴ i.e. of the claim that the obviously absurd statement 'God wills what he does not
 will' [*Deus vult quod non vult*] follows from the unobjectionable logical point that
 if something is not against one's will, one either wills it or is indifferent to it (i.e.
 that *non nolle* implies either *velle* (par. 5) or *non velle* (par. 6-7)).

2 argue. The geometrician, for example, does not know how to square
the circle,¹ but he does not argue about it; the theologian for his
part does not know how many angels there are, yet he does not
engage in dispute about the matter; the Egyptian likewise is ignorant
of the civilization of the Scythians,² yet he does not on this account
3 argue about their civilization. But the truth concerning this third
question is so fiercely disputed that, just as in other matters it is
ignorance which gives rise to dispute, so here it is rather the dispute
4 which is the cause of ignorance. For it often happens that men who
guide their will by the light of reason, should they be swayed by
misguided impulses, put the light of reason behind them and are
dragged by passion like blind men, and yet obstinately deny their
5 own blindness. And so it happens very often that not only does
falsehood find defenders, but that many stray beyond their own
borders and make incursions into the territory of others, where,
understanding nothing, they quite fail to make themselves under-
stood; and thus they provoke some people to anger, others to dis-
6 dain, and many to mirth. Now three classes of people in particular
fiercely oppose the truth we are investigating. For the supreme Pon-
7 tiff, the vicar of our Lord Jesus Christ and Peter's successor, to
whom we owe not what is due to Christ but what is due to Peter,³
perhaps motivated by a zealous concern for the keys, and with him
other shepherds of the Christian flock and others who I believe act
only out of zealous concern for Mother Church: these people
oppose the truth I am about to demonstrate – perhaps, as I said,
8 out of zealous concern and not out of pride. Certain others, how-
ever, whose stubborn greed has extinguished the light of reason,
and who, having the devil as their father,⁴ yet profess themselves
to be sons of the church, not only stir up quarrels in relation to this
question, but, loathing the very expression 'most sacred sovereign
authority', would even impudently deny the first principles which

¹ The example of squaring the circle is used repeatedly by Aristotle, e.g. *Sophistical Refutations* 11, 171b 15, 172a 2f.; *Physics* 1, 185a 14–17.

² Cf. *Ethics* 3, 3 1112a 28–30.

³ The distinction between what is due to Christ and what to Peter will prove to be a fundamental principle underlying the argument of Book III.

⁴ Cf. John 8, 44. This second category of opponents probably consists of princes and kings hostile to the emperor.

underlie this question and those previously discussed.⁵ There is also 9
a third category, called decretalists⁶ – ignorant and lacking in any
philosophical or theological training – who argue their case exclus-
ively with reference to their decretals⁷ (which I certainly think
worthy of veneration); trusting in their authoritativeness, I believe,
they disparage the empire. Nor is this a cause for astonishment, 10
since I once heard one of them⁸ say and stubbornly insist that the
traditions of the church are the foundation of faith. Let this wicked
belief be removed from the minds of mortals by those who, before
the traditions of the church, believed in Christ the Son of God
(whether Christ to come or Christ present or Christ already
crucified), and who in believing hoped, and hoping burned with
love, and burning with love became co-heirs along with him,⁹ as
the world does not doubt. And in order that such people should 11
be entirely excluded from the present arena, it must be borne in
mind that some scriptures preceded the church, others coincided
with the founding of the church, and others followed it. Before the 12
church are the Old and New Testaments, which 'he hath com-
manded for ever', as the Prophet says;¹⁰ for this is what the church
says speaking to her bridegroom: 'Draw me after thee.'¹¹ Contem- 13
poraneous with the church are those venerated principal councils¹²
at which Christ was present, as no believer doubts, since we know
that he said to the disciples as he was about to ascend to heaven:

⁵ Dante elsewhere cites Aristotle to the effect that there is no point in arguing with those who deny first principles.

⁶ i.e. commentators on the decretals, see n. 7.

⁷ The decretals are 'the papal decrees or epistles, usually written in reply to some question of general ecclesiastical law; they form the groundwork of a large part of the law of the Church. A compilation of them, with additions of his own, was issued by Pope Gregory IX in 1234, and with further additions, by Pope Boniface VIII in 1298, and again, in 1314, by Pope Clement V. Previously, some time before 1150, Gratian of Bologna had published his *Decretum*, a general collection of canons, papal epistles, and sentences of fathers, in imitation of the *Pandects*; this work appears to have been the chief authority on the canon law in the Middle Ages' (*Dict.* p. 220).

⁸ Attempts to identify the individual in question have proved fruitless.

⁹ Cf. Romans 8, 17.

¹⁰ Psalms 110, 9 (AV 111, 9).

¹¹ Song of Solomon 1, 3. The bridegroom is Christ.

¹² The first four ecumenical councils, i.e. the Councils of Nicaea (325), Constantinople (381), Ephesus (431) and Chalcedon (451).

'Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world', as Matthew bears witness.¹³ There are also the writings of the doctors of the church, of Augustine and others; anyone who doubts that they were helped by the Holy Spirit has either entirely failed to
 14 see their fruits or, if he has seen them, has not tasted them. Then after the church come the traditions called 'decretals', which, while certainly to be revered on account of their apostolic authority, must yet take second place to the fundamental scriptures, given that
 15 Christ reproached the priests for doing the opposite. For when they asked: 'Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders?' – for they did not wash their hands – Christ answered them (Matthew is our witness): 'Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?'¹⁴ By this he gave to understand
 16 clearly enough that tradition takes second place. Now if the traditions of the church come after the church, as has been shown, it must be the case that the church does not derive its authority from the traditions, but that the traditions derive their authority from the church. And so those who rely only on traditions must be excluded from the arena, as we said; for those who seek to grasp this truth must conduct their investigation by starting from those
 17 things from which the church's authority comes. And so, having excluded these people, others must also be excluded who, covered with crows' feathers, make a show of being white sheep in the Lord's flock. Such people are the sons of wickedness who, in order to carry out their shameful designs, prostitute their mother, drive out their brothers, and finally refuse to have a judge. Why should we seek to convince them, since, slaves to their own greed, they would be incapable of seeing first principles?
 18 It therefore remains to argue the case only with those who, motivated by some zealous concern for Mother Church, are unaware of that truth which we seek; and so it is with them – showing that reverence which a dutiful son owes his father, a dutiful son owes his mother, devout towards Christ, devout towards the Church, devout towards the shepherd, and devout towards all who profess the Christian religion – that I engage in battle in this book in the cause of truth.¹⁵

¹³ Matthew 28, 20.

¹⁴ Matthew 15, 1–3.

¹⁵ The phrase echoes *Ethics* 1, 6 1096a 14–15.

iv

The whole of the argument which follows will therefore be addressed to those people who assert that the authority of the empire is dependent on the authority of the church in the same way as a builder is dependent on the architect.¹ They are influenced by a number of different arguments, which they draw from the holy Scriptures and from certain actions both of the supreme Pontiff and the emperor himself; but they seek to have some support from reason on their side as well.² Firstly they
 2 say, basing themselves on *Genesis*,³ that God created 'two great lights' – a greater light and a lesser light – so that one might rule the day and the other rule the night; these they took in an allegorical sense to mean the two powers, i.e. the spiritual and the temporal. They then go on to argue that, just as the moon,
 3 which is the lesser light, has no light except that which it receives from the sun, in the same way the temporal power has no authority except that which it receives from the spiritual power. In order to refute this and other arguments of theirs, it must
 4 first be borne in mind that, as Aristotle states in the *Sophistical Refutations*,⁴ to refute an argument is to expose an error. And since an error may occur in the content and in the form of an argument, there are two ways in which an argument can be flawed: either because a false premiss has been adopted, or because the logic is faulty; both of these charges were made against Parmenides and Melissus by Aristotle when he said: 'They adopt false premisses and use invalid syllogisms.'⁵ And here I am taking 'false' in a broad sense to include the unlikely, which is the equivalent of falsehood when the question is one of

¹ Cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1, 1 where the hierarchical distinction, which was to become a medieval commonplace, reflects the difference between a theoretical and a practical grasp of a discipline.

² The arguments of Dante's opponents drawn from the Scriptures will occupy chs. iv–ix; those based on the historical actions of pope and emperor chs. x–xi; and the argument from reason ch. xii. Chs. xiii–xvi will develop Dante's arguments in support of his own thesis.

³ *Genesis* 1, 16. The allegorical interpretation of this passage dates from as early as the fourth century; see M. Maccarrone, 'Il terzo libro della *Monarchia*', in *Studi danteschi* 33, 1955, p. 33.

⁴ *Sophistical Refutations* 18, 176b 29.

⁵ *Physics* 1, 3 186a 6f.

5 likelihood.⁶ If the error is a formal one, the conclusion has to be demolished by the person who wishes to refute it, by showing that it does not observe the rules of syllogistic argument. If on the other hand the error is one of content, it is because one of the premisses adopted is either false without qualification or else false in a certain respect. If it is false without qualification, then the argument is refuted by demolishing the premiss; if it is false in a certain respect, then it is refuted by drawing distinctions.

6 Once this has been grasped, then to reach a better understanding of the refutation of this point and those which follow, it must be borne in mind that one can make two kinds of error when dealing with the mystical sense: either looking for it where it does not exist,
7 or taking it in some inadmissible way. À propos of the first of these Augustine says in the *De civitate Dei*: 'It must not be thought that every reported event has a further meaning; but those which have no further meaning are also included for the sake of those which do have such a meaning. Only the ploughshare breaks up the soil, but for this to happen the other parts of the plough are necessary as
8 well.'⁷ As regards the second the same writer says in the *De doctrina christiana*, speaking of detecting some other meaning in the scriptures than the man who wrote them, that 'it is the same mistake as if one were to abandon the highway and yet proceed by a round-about route to the same place the highway leads to'; and he adds: 'It must be pointed out that the habit of going off the highway may
9 force one to take cross-roads and wrong roads.'⁸ And he goes on to indicate why this is to be avoided when dealing with the Scriptures, saying: 'Faith will waver if the authority of the Holy Scriptures is
10 shaken.' I therefore say that if such things are done out of ignorance, the mistake should be carefully pointed out and then excused, just as one would excuse someone who feared a lion in the clouds; but if such things are done deliberately, those who make this mistake should be treated no differently from tyrants who do not observe public rights for the common welfare, but seek to turn them to their

⁶ On likelihood or probability, see Aristotle, *Topics* 1,1: in matters where it is impossible to have certainty we deal with reputable opinion, plausible propositions; and see *Summule* VII, 16.

⁷ *De civitate Dei* 16, 2.

⁸ *De doctrina christiana* 1, 36-7. It is interesting that only in this chapter is Augustine quoted, and then on a point of methodology, not of historical fact or interpretation.

own advantage. O supreme wickedness, even if it should happen in
dreams, to abuse the intention of the eternal Spirit! For this is not
a sin against Moses, nor against David, nor Job, nor Matthew, nor
Paul, but against the Holy Spirit who speaks through them.⁹ For
although there are many who record the divine word, it is God
alone who dictates, deigning to reveal his pleasure to us through
the pens of many men.

Having made these preliminary observations, with reference to
the point made earlier I now proceed to refute that claim of theirs
that those two lights allegorically signify these two kinds of power.
The whole force of their argument lies in this claim. That this
13 interpretation is completely untenable can be demonstrated in two
ways. Firstly, given that these two kinds of power are accidental
properties¹⁰ of man, God would seem to have perverted the natural
order by producing accidents before their subject, which is an
absurd claim to make about God; for those two lights were created
on the fourth day and man on the sixth, as is clear from the Bible.¹¹
Further, given that those two powers guide men towards certain
14 ends, as we shall see presently, if man had remained in the state of
innocence in which he was created by God, he would have had no
need of such guidance; such powers are thus remedies for the
infirmity of sin.¹² Therefore since on the fourth day man was not
15 only not a sinner but he did not even exist, it would have been
pointless to produce remedies; and this is against divine goodness.
For it would be a foolish doctor who, before a man's birth, prepared
a poultice for a future abscess. It therefore cannot be maintained
16 that on the fourth day God created these two powers; and conse-
quently Moses' meaning cannot have been what they pretend. This
17 argument can also be refuted, if we tolerate the false premiss, by
making a distinction; for a refutation based on a distinction is kinder
to one's adversary, in that he does not appear to be asserting an
outright falsehood, as a refutation based on demolishing his premiss

⁹ Cf. 2 Peter 1, 21.

¹⁰ On the fundamental Aristotelian distinction between accident and substance, see *Categories* 7.

¹¹ Genesis 1, 19 and 31.

¹² It is a matter of debate whether there is an unexamined conflict between the view here expressed of the state as a 'remedy for sin' [*remedium peccati*] (i.e. a direct consequence of Adam's sin), and the view expressed in Book I of the state as a natural political organization reflecting man's essential nature.

makes him appear to do. I therefore say that although the moon does not have light in abundance except in so far as it receives it from the sun, it does not follow from this that the moon derives
 18 from the sun. For it must be grasped that the moon's existence is one thing, its power another, and its function another again. As far as its existence is concerned, the moon is in no way dependent on the sun; nor is it as far as its powers are concerned, nor in an absolute sense as far as its function is concerned; for its movement occurs by its own motion, and its influence comes from its own
 19 rays; it has some light of its own, as is apparent in its eclipse.¹³ But as far as functioning better and more efficaciously is concerned, it receives something from the sun, namely abundant light; having
 20 received this, it operates more efficaciously. Thus I say that the temporal realm does not owe its existence to the spiritual realm, nor its power (which is its authority), and not even its function in an absolute sense; but it does receive from it the capacity to operate more efficaciously through the light of grace which in heaven and
 21 on earth the blessing of the supreme Pontiff infuses into it. And thus the argument contained a formal error, for the predicate in the conclusion was not the same as the predicate of the major premiss, as is obvious; for it runs like this: the moon receives its light from the sun, which is the spiritual power; the temporal power is the moon; therefore the temporal power receives its authority from the
 22 spiritual power. For in the predicate of the major premiss they put 'light', whereas in the predicate of the conclusion they put 'authority', and these are two different things in respect of their subject and their meaning, as we have seen.¹⁴

V

They also take an argument from the text of Moses,¹ saying that from the loins of Jacob there came forth a prefiguration of these two powers, in the persons of Levi and Judah: the one was the father of the priesthood, the other of temporal power. From this

¹³ That the faint light observable during a lunar eclipse is an effect caused by the reflection of solar rays only became apparent with Galileo.

¹⁴ It is a basic principle that a syllogism uses only three terms; see *Mon.* III, vii, 3 (and n. 2).

¹ Genesis 29, 34-5.

they go on to argue: the church stands in the same relation to the empire as Levi stood to Judah; Levi preceded Judah in his birth, as we read in the biblical account; therefore the church precedes
 2 the empire in authority. Now this point too is easily refuted, for when they say that Levi and Judah, the sons of Jacob, prefigure those powers, I could refute it in the same way by denying the
 3 premiss; but let us concede it. And when by their reasoning they reach the conclusion 'as Levi preceded in birth so the church pre-
 4 ceedes in authority', I say again that the predicate of the conclusion is a different thing from the predicate of the major premiss; for 'authority' is one thing and 'birth' another, both in respect of their subject and their meaning; and thus there is a logical flaw in the argument. And the reasoning goes like this: A precedes B in C; D is to E as A is to B; therefore D precedes E in F; but F and C are different things. And if they object saying that F follows from C,
 5 that is authority follows from seniority by birth, and that the consequent can rightly be set in the place of the antecedent,² as 'animal' can be set in the place of 'man', I say that this is false: for there are many people who have seniority by birth who not only do not rank higher in authority, but are in fact outranked by people younger than themselves; as is clearly the case where bishops are younger than their archdeacons. And thus their objection is seen
 to be marred by the fallacy of 'treating what is not a cause as a cause'.³

vi

Then from the text of the first book of *Kings*¹ they take the creation and deposition of Saul, and they say that King Saul was placed on the throne and removed from it by Samuel, who was acting as God's vicar by his command, as we read in the biblical account. And from
 2 this they argue that just as he, as God's vicar, had the authority to give and take away temporal power and transfer it to someone else, so now too God's vicar, the head of the universal church, has the authority to give and to take away and even to transfer the sceptre

² See *Mon.* II, v, n. 27.

³ On the 'fallacy of the false cause' see Aristotle, *Sophistical Refutations* 5, 167b 20f. and 6, 168b 22f.; and *Summule* VII, 164-70.

¹ 1 Regum 10, 1 and 15, 23-8; 16, 13 (AV 1 Samuel).

of temporal power; from which it would undoubtedly follow that imperial authority would be dependent in the way they claim. This argument too must be answered by denying their claim that Samuel was God's vicar, because he acted on that occasion not as vicar but as a special emissary for a particular purpose, that is to say as a messenger bearing God's express command: this is clear because he did and reported only what God told him to. For it must be borne in mind that it is one thing to be a vicar, and quite another to be a messenger or minister; just as it is one thing to be a writer and another to be an interpreter.² For a vicar is a person to whom jurisdiction is entrusted within the terms of the law or at his own discretion; and thus within the limits of the jurisdiction entrusted to him he can take action by applying the law or using his own discretion in matters of which his lord knows nothing. But a messenger *qua* messenger cannot do this; for just as a hammer functions only by virtue of the craftsman using it, so a messenger too is entirely dependent on the will of the person who sends him. It does not follow, then, that if God did that using Samuel as his messenger, the vicar of God may do it. For God has done, does and will do many things through his angels which the vicar of God, Peter's successor, could not do. Hence their argument is 'from the whole to the part', in affirmative form like this: 'man can see and hear; therefore the eye can see and hear'. And this is not valid; it would be valid if put into negative form like this: 'man cannot fly; therefore man's arms cannot fly'. And in the same way we would have: 'God cannot through a messenger make undone things that have once been done, as Agathon observed:³ therefore his vicar cannot do so either'.

vii

They also take the offerings of the Magi from the text of *Matthew*,¹ saying that Christ received the frankincense along with the gold to signify that he was lord and ruler of spiritual and temporal things;

² The difference is one of independence or relative autonomy, the interpreter being tied to and limited by the text he interprets.

³ *Ethics* 6, 2 1139b 8–11. The original is talking about God himself; Dante adds the words 'through a messenger' [*per nuntium*].

¹ *Matthew* 2, 1–13.

from this they infer that Christ's vicar is the lord and ruler of the same things, and thus has authority over both of them. In reply to this, I accept the literal meaning of *Matthew* and their interpretation of it, but I reject what they try to infer from it. Their syllogism runs like this: 'God is the Lord of spiritual and temporal things; the supreme Pontiff is God's vicar; therefore he is the lord of spiritual and temporal things'. For each of the premisses is true, but the middle term is not the same and the argument uses four terms, so that the syllogism contains a formal error, as is clear from what is said in the *Prior Analytics*.² For 'God', the subject in the major premiss, is one thing, and 'God's vicar', the predicate in the minor premiss, is a different thing. And if anyone were to base an objection on a vicar's being equivalent, the objection has no force, for no vicariate, human or divine, can be equivalent to the primary authority; and this is easy to see. For we know that Peter's successor is not the equivalent of divine authority at least as regards the workings of nature, for he could not make earth rise nor fire descend by virtue of the office entrusted to him. Nor could all things be entrusted to him by God, since God certainly could not entrust to him the power to create and the power to baptize,³ as is quite apparent, although Peter Lombard expressed the contrary opinion in his fourth book.⁴ We also know that a man's vicar, in as much as he is his vicar, is not equivalent to him, because no one can give away what does not belong to him. A prince's authority belongs to a prince only as something for his use, for no prince can confer authority on himself; he can accept it and renounce it, but he cannot create another prince, for the creation of a prince is not dependent on a prince. If this is the case, it is clear that no prince can appoint a vicar to take his place who is equivalent to him in all things; thus the objection has no force.

viii

They likewise take from the text of *Matthew* those words of Christ to Peter: 'And whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound

² *Prior Analytics* I, 25 41b 36f.

³ i.e. the power to validate baptism; on the theological point that the pope acts only as God's minister when he baptizes, see Nardi's essay 'Dal Convivio alla Commedia', in the book of the same title, Roma 1960, pp. 109–12.

⁴ *Sententiae* 4, 5.

in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.¹ This was also said to all the apostles (they take the same thing from the text both of *Matthew* and of *John*). On this they base their argument that God has granted to Peter's successor the power to bind and loose all things; and they infer from this that he can 'loose' the laws and decrees of the empire, and 'bind' laws and decrees in the place of the temporal power; and what they claim would indeed logically follow. This argument must be answered by drawing a distinction in relation to the major premiss of the syllogism they use. Their syllogism takes this form: 'Peter could loose and bind all things; Peter's successor can do anything Peter could do; therefore Peter's successor can loose and bind all things'. From this they deduce that he can loose and bind the authority and the decrees of the empire.² I grant the minor premiss, but I do not grant the major premiss without drawing a distinction. And thus I say that this universal sign 'all', which is contained in 'whatsoever', never refers beyond the scope of the term to which it refers. For example if I say 'all animals run', the word 'all' refers to every creature which is included within the class 'animal'; but if I say 'all men run', then here the universal sign refers only to those beings that come into the category 'man'; and when I say 'all grammarians', then the range of reference is even narrower.

For this reason one must always take into consideration what it is that the universal sign refers to; having done so, and having established the nature and the scope of the term to which it refers, the range of its reference will be readily apparent.³ So when the statement is made 'whatsoever thou shalt bind', if the word 'whatsoever' were taken in an absolute sense, what they say would be true; and Peter could not only do that, but also loose a wife from her husband and bind her to another while the first was still alive; and this he certainly cannot do. He could also absolve me without my having

¹ Matthew 16, 19.

² This argument, one of those most frequently advanced by the hierocrats, had been used in *Unam sanctam*, Boniface VIII's Bull of 18 November 1302. A full account of the history of its use is given in J. A. Watt, 'The Theory of Papal Monarchy in the Thirteenth Century. The Contribution of the Canonists', in *Traditio* 20, 1964, pp. 179-317.

³ On the logical principle Dante is here invoking, see *Summule XII, De distributionibus*.

repented, which even God himself could not do.⁴ This being so then, it is clear that the range of reference is to be taken not in an absolute sense, but in relation to something. That it is to be taken in relation to something is clear enough when we consider what was granted to him, for it is precisely to this that the range of reference is linked. For Christ says to Peter: 'I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven', that is: 'I shall make you gate-keeper of the kingdom of heaven.' He then adds 'and whatsoever', which is to say 'all that', i.e. 'and all that pertains to this office thou shalt have the power to loose and bind'. And thus the universal sign which is contained in 'whatsoever' is limited in its reference by the office of the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and if it is taken in this way, the proposition is true; but it is not true in an absolute sense, as is clear. And thus I say that, although Peter's successor can loose and bind as the office entrusted to Peter requires, nonetheless it does not follow from this that he can loose or bind the decrees or the laws of the empire, as they maintained, unless they were further to prove that this pertained to the office of the keys. That the opposite is the case will be demonstrated below.⁵

ix

They also take those words spoken by Peter to Christ in *Luke*, when he says: 'Behold, here are two swords';¹ and they maintain that by those two swords we are to understand the two powers mentioned earlier, which Peter said were present wherever he was (i.e. belonged to him); and from this they argue that those two powers as far as their authority is concerned reside with Peter's successor. This too must be answered by demolishing the allegorical interpretation on which they base their argument. For they claim that those two swords alluded to by Peter signify the two powers mentioned. This must be utterly rejected, both because that reply would have been at odds with Christ's intention, and because Peter as was his

⁴ These are classic instances of the absurd consequences of an absolutist interpretation of papal powers. On the prohibition of divorce, see Matthew 19, 9; Mark 10, 11-12; Luke 16, 18.

⁵ In ch. xiv.

¹ Luke 22, 38. The words were in fact spoken not by Peter but by all the apostles.

habit answered unreflectingly, only considering the surface of things.² It will not be hard to see that the reply was at odds with Christ's intention, if we take into consideration the words which precede it and the occasion which gave rise to them. Thus it must be borne in mind that this was said on the day of the Last Supper; hence Luke begins his account earlier: 'Then came the day of unleavened bread, when the Paschal lamb must be killed';³ it was during this supper that Christ foretold his impending passion, in which he must be separated from his disciples. It must likewise be borne in mind that when those words were uttered all twelve disciples were present; hence shortly after the words cited Luke says: 'And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him.'⁴ From here the conversation continued until he came to this: 'When I sent you forth without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye any thing? And they said, Nothing. Then said he unto them, But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip; and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one.'⁵ From this Christ's meaning is clear enough; for he did not say: 'Buy or obtain two swords', but twelve, since he said to the twelve apostles 'he that hath no sword, let him buy one', so that each of them might have one. Furthermore he said this as he was warning them of the persecution and contempt they would face, as though to say: 'As long as I was with you, you were accepted; now you will be driven out; so that you must acquire for yourselves even those things which once I forbade you to have, for you will need them'. And thus if Peter's reply, which is in response to this, did have the meaning they claim, it would still have been at odds with what Christ intended; and Christ would have reproached him for this, as he did reproach him many times, when he replied not knowing what he was saying. On this occasion he did not do so, but let it pass, saying to him: 'That is enough'; as though to say: 'I say this because of your need; but if each of you cannot have one, two will suffice.' And that Peter was in the habit of speaking without reflecting is proved by his hasty and unthinking impul-

² Dante refutes the allegorical interpretation of his opponents with these two arguments, which will be elaborated respectively in pars. 3-8 and 9-17.

³ Luke 22, 7.

⁴ Luke 22, 14.

⁵ Luke 22, 35-6.

siveness, which came not just from the sincerity of his faith, but, I think, from his simple and ingenuous nature. All Christ's evangelists testify to this impulsiveness of his. For Matthew writes that when Jesus asked his disciples: 'Who do you say that I am?', Peter replied before all the others: 'You are Christ, the son of the living God.'⁶ He also writes that when Christ said to the disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things, Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying: 'Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto you'; and Christ, turning to him, reproached him, saying: 'Get thee behind me, Satan.'⁷ He also writes that on the Mount of the Transfiguration, in the presence of Christ, Moses and Elias and the two sons of Zebedee, Peter said: 'Lord, it is good for us to be here; if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.'⁸ Likewise he writes that when the disciples were in their boat at night and Christ walked on the water, Peter said: 'Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water.'⁹ Again he writes that, when Christ foretold to his disciples their desertion of him, Peter replied: 'Though all men shall become deserters because of thee, yet will I never desert thee';¹⁰ and later: 'Though I should die with thee, yet I will not deny thee.'¹¹ And Mark too bears witness to this;¹² Luke for his part writes that Peter also said to Christ, just before the words quoted above about the swords: 'Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison and to death.'¹³ And John says of him that when Christ wished to wash his feet, Peter said to him: 'Lord, dost thou wash my feet?'; and later: 'Thou shalt never wash my feet.'¹⁴ He also says that he struck the servant of the high priest with his sword,¹⁵ and all four of them relate this.¹⁶ John also says that when

⁶ Matthew 16, 15-16.

⁷ Matthew 16, 21-3.

⁸ Matthew 17, 3-4.

⁹ Matthew 14, 28.

¹⁰ The AV translates: 'Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended.'

¹¹ Matthew 26, 31-5.

¹² Mark 14, 29-31.

¹³ Luke 22, 33-4.

¹⁴ John 13, 6-8.

¹⁵ John 18, 10.

¹⁶ Matthew 26, 51-2; Mark 14, 47; Luke 22, 50-2. These three accounts do not name Peter.

Peter came to the tomb he went straight in, seeing the other disciple hesitating at the entrance.¹⁷ Again he says that, when Jesus was on the sea shore after the Resurrection, 'when Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher's coat unto him (for he was naked), and did cast himself into the sea'.¹⁸ Finally he says that when Peter saw
 17 John, he said to Jesus: 'Lord, and what shall this man do?'¹⁹ It is helpful to have listed these episodes involving our Archimandrite in praise of his ingenuousness, for they show quite clearly that when he spoke of the two swords he was answering Christ with no deeper
 18 meaning in mind. For if those words of Christ and Peter are to be understood figuratively, they are not to be made to bear the meaning those people claim, but they are to be related to the meaning of that sword of which Matthew writes in this way: 'Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father,'
 19 etc.²⁰ This happens both with words and with actions; that is why Luke spoke to Theophilus of the things 'that Jesus began both to do and teach'.²¹ This is the sword Christ instructed them to obtain, and to which Peter was referring when he answered that there were two of them there. For they were ready both for the words and for the actions by means of which they would bring about what Christ said he had come to do by the sword, as has been said.

X

Again, some people maintain that the Emperor Constantine, cured of leprosy by the intercession of Sylvester who was then supreme Pontiff, made a gift to the church of the seat of empire (i.e. Rome),
 2 along with many other imperial privileges.¹ From this they argue

¹⁷ John 20, 4-6.

¹⁸ John 21, 7.

¹⁹ John 22, 21.

²⁰ Matthew 10, 34-5. Dante now suggests an alternative allegorical interpretation of the swords.

²¹ Acts 1, 1. Commentators have not identified a source for this interpretation of Luke's words, which appears to be Dante's own.

¹ This supposed gift to the church, known as the 'donation of Constantine', was in Dante's eyes the key event in human history which explained the sorry state of the modern world, see *Mon.* I, xvi, 3 and II, xi, 8. By giving 'Rome and all the provinces, districts and cities of Italy and the West' to Pope Sylvester, Constantine broke up what should have been an indissoluble unity, and set the church

that since that time no one can take on those imperial privileges unless he receives them from the church, to whom (they say) they belong; and it would indeed follow from this that the one authority was dependent on the other, as they claim.

Having stated and refuted those arguments which appeared to 3 be based on the word of God, it now remains to state and refute those which are based on human actions and human reason. The first of these is the one just referred to, which they formulate as a syllogism in this way: 'those things which belong to the church can only be held legitimately by someone to whom the church has granted them' (and this we concede); 'Roman sovereign authority belongs to the church; therefore no one can hold it legitimately unless granted it by the church'; and they prove the minor premiss with reference to what was touched on earlier about Constantine. It is this minor premiss which I therefore deny, and when they 4 'prove' it I say that their 'proof' proves nothing, because Constantine was not in a position to give away the privileges of empire, nor was the church in a position to accept them.² And if they stub- 5 bornly insist, my point can be proved in this way: nobody has the right to do things because of an office he holds which are in conflict with that office, otherwise one and the same thing would oppose itself in its own nature, which is impossible; but to divide the empire is in conflict with the office bestowed on the emperor, since his task is to hold mankind in obedience to a single will (its commands and its prohibitions), as can easily be seen from the first book of this treatise; therefore the emperor is not allowed to divide the empire. Thus if certain privileges had been taken away from 6 the empire by Constantine, as they maintain, and had passed into the control of the church, that seamless garment would have been torn which even those who pierced Christ the true God with their

on the path of territorial acquisition. The document which records the 'donation' was exposed as a forgery by Lorenzo Valla on philological grounds only in 1440, but its juridical validity had been debated for centuries; see D. Maffei, *La donazione di Costantino nei giuristi medievali*, Milano 1964. Nor was its significance merely theoretical: Boniface VIII, for example, had forced the German Emperor-elect Albert to acknowledge its force; see B. Nardi, 'La "donatio Constantini" e Dante', in *Nel mondo di Dante*, Roma 1944, pp. 119-20. See *Dict.*, pp. 234-5.
² Dante's refutation is twofold, turning on the unsuitability of the donor and the unsuitability of the recipient, arguments developed in pars. 5-12 and 13-17 respectively.

7 lance dared not divide.³ Moreover, just as the church has its foundation, so too the empire has its own. For the foundation of the church is Christ; hence the Apostle in *Corinthians* says: 'For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.'⁴ He is the rock on which the church is built. But the foundation of
 8 the empire is human right. Now I say that, just as the church is not allowed to act against its own foundation, but must always rest upon it, in accordance with those words in the *Song of Solomon*: 'Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, flowing with delights, leaning upon her beloved?';⁵ so too the empire is not allowed to do anything which is in conflict with human right. But if the empire were to destroy itself that would conflict with human
 9 right: therefore the empire is not allowed to destroy itself. Therefore since to divide the empire would be to destroy it – for empire consists precisely in the unity of universal monarchy – it is clear that whoever embodies imperial authority is not allowed to divide the empire. For it is clear from what was said earlier that to destroy the empire is in conflict with human right.

10 Moreover, all jurisdiction is prior to the judge who exercises it, for the judge is appointed for the sake of the jurisdiction, and not vice versa; but the empire is a jurisdiction which embraces within its scope every other temporal jurisdiction:⁶ therefore it is prior to its judge, who is the emperor, for the emperor is appointed for its sake, and not vice versa. From this it is clear that the emperor, precisely as emperor, cannot change it, because he derives from it
 11 the fact that he is what he is. Now I say this: either he was emperor when he is said to have conferred this power on the church, or he was not; if he was not, then it is obvious that he could not give away any part of the empire; if he was, since such a conferring of power would be a lessening of his own jurisdiction, then precisely
 12 because he was emperor he could not do it. Besides, if one emperor could cut off some portion of the jurisdiction of the empire, then so could another on the same grounds. And since temporal jurisdic-

³ John 19, 23–4; cf. *Mon.* 1, xvi, 3 and n. 5.

⁴ 1 Corinthians 3, 11; cf. Ephesians 2, 20; 1 Peter 2, 6.

⁵ Song of Solomon 8, 5 (the AV omits the phrase 'flowing with delights').

⁶ Cf. Dante's opening definition in *Mon.* 1, ii, 2: the two key aspects of that definition (that monarchy is a unity, and that it overrides and encompasses all lower forms of secular authority) underlie the attack on the donation of Constantine.

tion is finite and every finite thing can be destroyed by a finite series of subdivisions, it would follow that the primary jurisdiction could be entirely obliterated; and this is against reason. Again, since a
 13 person who gives functions as an agent, and a person who receives as a patient, as Aristotle says in the fourth book of the *Ethics*, for a donation to be legitimate requires a suitable disposition not just in the giver, but in the recipient as well: 'for it seems that the action of active agents is transferred to the "patient" if he is disposed to receive it'.⁷ But the church was utterly unsuited to receiving tem-
 14 poral things because of the command which expressly forbade it, as we gather from these words in *Matthew*: 'Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses, nor scrip for your journey', etc.⁸ For even if in *Luke*⁹ we find that this command was relaxed with regard to certain things, yet I have been unable to find that after that prohibition the church was ever granted permission to possess gold and silver. And thus, if the church could not receive
 15 it, then even supposing that Constantine had been in a position to perform that action, nonetheless the action itself was not possible because of the unsuitability of the 'patient' or recipient. It is therefore clear that the church could not accept it as a possession, nor Constantine give it as an irrevocable gift. The emperor could how-
 16 ever consign a patrimony and other resources to the guardianship of the church, provided it was without prejudice to the superior imperial authority, whose unity admits no division. And God's vicar
 17 could receive it, not as owner but as administrator of its fruits for the church and for Christ's poor, as the apostles are known to have done.¹⁰

xi

Again they say that Pope Hadrian called on Charlemagne to defend him and the church against the wrongs done by the Longobards at the time of Desiderius their king; and that Charlemagne received the honour of empire from him in spite of the fact that Michael

⁷ *Ethics* 4, 1 1120a 14.

⁸ *Matthew* 10, 9–10.

⁹ *Luke* 22, 35–6, as already cited in the previous chapter; cf. *Luke* 9, 3 and 10, echoing *Matthew*.

¹⁰ *Acts* 4, 34–7.

- 2 was ruling in Constantinople.¹ For this reason they say that all those who have been emperors of the Romans since his time are defenders of the church and must be called to office by the church; from this that dependency which they wish to prove would indeed follow.
- 3 To demolish this argument I say that they are saying nothing at all: the usurping of a right does not establish a right. For if it did, it could be proved in the same way that the authority of the church is dependent on the emperor, given that the emperor Otto restored Pope Leo and deposed Benedict and led him into exile in Saxony.²

xii

- Their argument based on reason runs as follows. Adopting a principle from the tenth book of the *Metaphysics*,¹ they say: all things belonging to a single species are referred to one thing which is the measure for all things which belong to that species; but all men belong to the same species; therefore they are to be referred to one man as their common measure. And since the supreme Pontiff and the emperor are men, if that conclusion is valid, it must be possible to refer them to a single man. And since the pope must not be referred to any other man, it remains that the emperor along with all other men must be referred to him, as to their measure and rule; from this too the conclusion they want to reach does indeed follow.
- 3 To refute this argument I say that, when they say 'Those things which are of one species must be referred to a single thing of that species which is the measure for the species', they are correct. And similarly they are correct when they say that all men belong to a single species; and again they reach a correct conclusion when from these premisses they infer that all men are to be referred to a single measure for the species. But when from this conclusion they draw

¹ Dante's account is inaccurate on points of detail (Irene not Michael was ruling in Constantinople when Charlemagne was crowned; the Pope was Leo III not Hadrian), but this does not affect the logic of his argument. Davis (p. 163, n. 63) points out that Dante's inaccuracies probably derive from Tolomeo da Lucca.

² Pope Leo VIII had been deposed and then expelled by John XII, who was succeeded by Benedict V. The Emperor Otto I subsequently reinstated Leo and Benedict was exiled to Saxony in 964.

³ *Metaphysics* 10, 1 1052b 18–19 and 1053a 18–20: Dante here uses the title *Prima philosophia* (cf. *Met.* 6, 1 and 11, 4); elsewhere (*Mon.* III, xiii, 6) he will call it *De simpliciter ente*.

their inference concerning the pope and the emperor, they commit the accidental fallacy.² To clarify this it must be borne in mind that 4 it is one thing to be a man, another to be pope; and in the same way it is one thing to be a man and another to be emperor, just as it is one thing to be a man and another to be a father and a master. For man is what he is because of his substantial form, by virtue of 5 which he belongs to a species and a genus and is placed in the category 'substance'; whereas a father is what he is because of his accidental form, which consists of a relationship by virtue of which he belongs to a certain species and genus and comes into the category of 'being related to', that is to say 'relationship'.³ If this were not so, everything would fall within the category 'substance', inas- 6 much as no accidental form can have autonomous existence without being located in an existing substance; and this is false. Since there- fore pope and emperor are what they are by virtue of certain 7 relationships, i.e. by virtue of papal and imperial office, which are respectively relationships of 'paternity' and of 'lordship', it is clear that pope and emperor must be assigned as pope and emperor to the category of relationship, and as a consequence be referred to something within that category. So I am saying that there is one 8 measure to which they are to be referred as men, and another as pope and emperor. For as men they are to be referred to the perfect man, who is the measure of all the others, and the model, as it were – whoever he might be – of what is most unified in his species, as we can deduce from the end of the *Ethics*.⁵ Insofar as they are 8 terms which express a relationship, as is obvious, they are either to be referred one to the other (if one is subordinate to the other, or if they are related to one another within the species by the type of relationship), or else to some third entity to which they are to be referred as to a common unity. But it cannot be maintained that 9 one is subordinated to the other, because if this were the case one

² i.e. they confuse accident with substance, see *Mon.* III, iv, n. 10.

³ Being emperor or pope does not alter the fundamental nature of a man as a man, his 'substantial form' [*forma substantialis*] which is common to all human beings; paternity or fatherhood is by contrast an 'accidental form' [*forma accidentalis*] and implies a relationship to others.

⁴ The word 'pope' [*Papa*] is related etymologically to 'father' [*pater*], hence is considered to denote a relationship of paternity.

⁵ *Ethics* 10, 5 1176a 15–19 [?]: it is difficult to pinpoint the passage Dante had in mind.

would be predicated of the other; and this is false, for we do not say 'the emperor is pope', nor vice versa. Nor can it be said that they are related to one another within the species, for the pope's function is one thing and the emperor's another, precisely because they are pope and emperor; therefore they are to be referred to some other thing in which they find their unity.

- 10 Consequently it must be grasped that as relationship stands to relationship, so the terms of relationship stand to one another.⁶ If therefore papal and imperial office, being relationships of authority, are to be referred to the principle of authority, from which they derive with their differentiating characteristics, then pope and emperor (being the terms of relationship) will be referable to some entity in which it is possible to discern that principle of authority
11 without the other differentiating characteristics. And this will either be God himself, in whom all principles form an absolute unity, or else some entity lower than God, in which the principle of authority, derived from the absolute principle and differentiating itself
12 from it,⁷ becomes distinctive and individual. Thus it is evident that pope and emperor, considered as men, are to be referred to one thing; but as pope and emperor they are to be referred to another; and thus the answer to their argument from reason is clear.

xiii

Having stated and ruled out the errors on which those who claim that Roman sovereign authority derives from the Roman Pontiff principally base their case, we must return to demonstrate the truth of the third question we proposed from the beginning to discuss. This truth will emerge with sufficient clarity if, conducting our inquiry in the light of the principle established earlier,¹ I show that the said imperial authority derives directly from the summit of all
2 being, that is from God. And this will be demonstrated whether

⁶ In concrete terms, as papal office stands to imperial office, so pope stands to emperor.

⁷ The best explanation of the phrase 'differentiating itself from it' [*per differentiam superpositionis*], and an unarguable case for its authenticity, is given by Ricci, *EN*, pp. 264-5; see also E. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies. A Study in Medieval Political Theology*, Princeton 1957, p. 458.

¹ In *Mon.* iii, ii, 2.

the church's authority is shown to have no bearing on it – given that there is no quarrel about any other authority – or whether it is proved positively² that it derives directly from God. That the
3 authority of the church is not the cause of imperial authority is proved in this way: a thing cannot be the cause of the power of something else if that something else is fully functional when the first thing does not exist or exerts no influence; but the empire had all its authority at a time when the church did not exist or had no influence; therefore the church is not the cause of the empire's
4 power, nor therefore of its authority, since its power and its authority are the same thing. Let the church be A, the empire B, the authority or power of the empire C; if, when A did not yet exist, C was in B, it is impossible for A to be the cause of C's being in B, since it is impossible for an effect to exist before its cause. Besides, if when A is not yet functioning, C is in B, then of necessity A is not the cause of C's being in B, since to produce an effect the cause must operate first (especially the efficient cause,³ about which we are here speaking). The major premiss of this proof is clear from the
5 terms in which it is formulated;⁴ the minor premiss⁵ is confirmed by Christ and by the church. Christ confirms it by his birth and his death, as was said earlier; the church when Paul in the *Acts of the Apostles* says to Festus: 'I stand at Caesar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged';⁶ and again when the angel of God said to Paul a little later: 'Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar';⁷ and again, later, Paul said to the Jews who were in Italy: 'But when the Jews spake against it, I was constrained to appeal unto Caesar, not that I had aught to accuse my nation of, but to deliver my soul from death.'⁸ For if Caesar had not at that time had authority to
6 judge temporal matters, Christ would not have assented to this, nor would the angel have pronounced those words, nor would the man

² i.e. 'probatively', 'affirmatively' [*ostensive*], giving a positive proof and not a proof by default using an argument *per impossibile*; see Aristotle, *Prior Analytics* 1, 29; and *Mon.* iii, ii, n. 2.

³ See *Metaphysics* 5, 2; *Mon.* i, ii, n. 3.

⁴ i.e. it does not need to be proved, because it is self-evident that 'a thing cannot be the cause. . .' (par. 3).

⁵ The minor premiss is that 'the empire had all its authority. . .' (par. 3).

⁶ Acts 25, 10.

⁷ Acts 27, 24.

⁸ Acts 28, 19; Psalms 32, 19 (AV 33, 19); Joshua 2, 13.

who said 'I desire to depart and to be with Christ' have been appealing to a competent judge.⁹ Indeed if Constantine had not had authority, he could not legitimately have handed over into the church's guardianship those things of the empire's which he did hand over; and thus the church would benefit by that donation unjustly, since God wishes offerings to be spotless, in accordance with the words of *Leviticus*: 'No offering, which ye shall bring unto the lord, shall be made with leaven.'¹⁰ For although this commandment appears to be addressed to those who make an offering, nonetheless by implication it refers also to the recipients; for it is foolish to think that God would wish that something should be received which he has forbidden should be offered, since in the same book he commands the Levites: 'Neither shall ye make yourselves unclean with them, that ye should be defiled thereby.'¹¹ But to say that the church misuses the patrimony entrusted to it in this way is most improper; the proposition from which this followed is therefore false.

xiv

Moreover, if the church had the power to confer authority on the Roman Prince, it would have it either from God, or from itself, or from some emperor, or from the consent of all men or at least the most exceptional among them; there is no other channel by which this power could have flowed to the church; but it does not derive it from any of these; therefore it does not have the said power. That it does not derive it from any of these can be shown as follows. For if it had received it from God, this would have been either by divine law or by natural law, because what comes from nature comes from God, although the converse is not true. But it did not come by natural law, because nature imposes laws only on its own effects, since when God brings something into being without secondary agents¹ he cannot be less than perfect. Thus, since the church is not an effect of nature, but of God who said: 'Upon this rock I will build my church',² and elsewhere: 'I have finished the work

⁹ Philippians 1, 23; cf. *Mon.* II, xi on the authority of the judge.

¹⁰ *Leviticus* 2, 11.

¹¹ *Leviticus* 11, 43.

¹ i.e. directly, not using nature as an intermediary; cf. *Mon.* II, iv, 1 on miracles.

² *Matthew* 16, 18.

which thou gavest me to do',³ it is apparent that it is not nature which gave its law to the church. But it did not come by divine law either, for the whole of divine law is encompassed within the two Testaments, and I am quite unable to find in them that involvement in or concern for temporal things was recommended to the first or the later priesthood. On the contrary I find that the first priests were expressly enjoined to keep aloof from such involvement, as is clear from God's words to Moses;⁴ as were the priests of the new order in Christ's words to his disciples;⁵ freedom from such involvement would not be possible if the authority of temporal power flowed from the priesthood, since at the very least it would have had the responsibility for taking action to confer authority, and then for continual watchfulness lest the person on whom authority had been conferred deviate from the path of righteousness. That the church did not receive this power from itself can easily be proved. There is nothing which can give what it does not possess; and so every agent must be in actuality like the thing which it intends to produce, as we see from the *Metaphysics*.⁶ But it is clear that if the church gave itself that power, it did not have it before it gave it; and thus it would have given itself what it did not possess, which is impossible. That it did not receive it from some emperor is sufficiently clear from what was proved earlier.⁷ And who can doubt that it did not receive it from the consent of all men or of the most exceptional among them, given that not only all Asians and Africans, but also the greater part of those who live in Europe find the idea abhorrent? It is tedious to offer proofs in matters which are self-evident.⁸

xv

Equally, whatever is in conflict with the nature of a thing is not to be numbered among its powers, since the powers of each thing

³ *John* 17, 4.

⁴ *Numbers* 18, 20 (but God is here speaking to Aaron, not to Moses); *Deuteronomy* 18, 1-2.

⁵ *Matthew* 10, 9-10; 6, 19f.

⁶ *Metaphysics* 9, 8 (cf. 7, 7); cf. *Mon.* I, xiii, 3.

⁷ In ch. x.

⁸ Cf. *Mon.* I, i, 4.

come from its nature and serve to achieve its purpose; but the power to confer authority on the realm of our mortality is in conflict with the nature of the church; therefore it is not to be numbered among its powers. To clarify the minor premiss it must be borne in mind that the church's nature is the form of the church; for although 'nature' is used with reference to matter and to form, nonetheless it refers first and foremost to form, as is shown in the *Physics*.¹ Now the 'form' of the church is simply the life of Christ, including both his words and his deeds; for his life was the model and exemplar for the church militant, especially for the pastors, and above all for the supreme pastor, whose task is to feed the lambs and the sheep.² Hence he himself says, in *John*, leaving the 'form' of his life: 'I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you';³ and he said to Peter in particular, after bestowing on him the office of pastor, as we read in the same Gospel: 'Peter, follow me.'⁴ But Christ renounced this kind of kingdom in the presence of Pilate, saying: 'My kingdom is not of this world; if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now is my kingdom not from hence.'⁵ Which is not to be understood to mean that Christ, who is God, is not Lord of this kingdom, for the Psalmist says 'The sea is his, and he made it: and his hands formed the dry land';⁶ but that, as the model for the church, he had no concern for this kingdom. Just as if a gold seal were to say, speaking of itself: 'I am not the measure for any class of things'; the statement would not refer to the fact of its being gold, for gold is the measure for the class of metals, but would rather refer to the fact that it is a particular image which can be reproduced by exerting pressure. Thus the 'form' of the church requires that it should speak in this same way and feel in this same way;⁷ for it to say or to feel the opposite would be in conflict with its form, as is apparent, that is to say with its nature, which is the same thing. From this we deduce that the power to confer authority on this earthly kingdom is in conflict with the

¹ *Physics* 2, 1 (Dante uses the title *De naturali auditu*).

² *John* 21, 16f.

³ *John* 13, 15.

⁴ *John* 21, 19.

⁵ *John* 18, 36.

⁶ *Psalms* 94, 5 (AV 95, 5).

⁷ i.e. in the same way as Christ, as reflected in his words cited in par. 5.

nature of the church; for conflict which emerges in a thought or in a statement derives from a conflict which exists in the thing which is thought about or spoken of,⁸ just as the truth or falsehood of a statement derives from the fact that the thing referred to is or is not the case, as we are taught in the *Categories*.⁹ Thus we have sufficiently proved with the above arguments, by a reduction to the absurd,¹⁰ that the authority of the empire in no way derives from the church.

xvi

Although in the previous chapter it was shown by a *reductio ad absurdum*¹ that the authority of the empire does not derive from the authority of the supreme Pontiff, nonetheless we have not given a complete proof² that it derives directly from God, except insofar as that follows as a consequence – the consequence being precisely that if it does not derive from God's vicar, it derives from God. Therefore, to complete the task we set ourselves, we must give a 'positive'³ proof that the emperor, or world ruler, is directly dependent on the prince of the universe, who is God. In order to understand this it must be borne in mind that man alone among created beings is the link between corruptible and incorruptible things; and thus he is rightly compared by philosophers to the horizon, which is the link between the two hemispheres.⁴ For if he is considered in terms of each of his essential constituent parts, that is soul and body, man is corruptible; if he is considered only in terms of one, his soul, he is incorruptible. Hence the appositeness of Aristotle's remark when he said of the soul, as being incorruptible, in the second book of the *De anima*: 'And it alone, being immortal, can

⁸ i.e. words and feelings reflect an underlying reality, thus if the church were to speak or feel in a way which is in conflict with Christ's words, it would be in conflict with Christ and hence with its own nature.

⁹ *Categories* 12, 14b 18–22; cf. *Summule* III, 30 [*Ab eo enim quod res est vel non est, oratio vera vel falsa dicitur*].

¹⁰ The absurdity is that if his adversaries' argument were correct the church would be required to act against its own nature.

¹ See *Mon.* III, xv, n. 10.

² A complete proof must include the 'ostensive' or positive proof Dante will now develop in this final chapter.

³ See *Mon.* III, xiii, n. 2.

⁴ Cf. *Liber de causis* 2a.

5 be separated from the corruptible.⁵ Thus if man is a kind of link between corruptible and incorruptible things, since every such link shares something of the nature of the extremes it unites, man must
 6 necessarily have something of both natures. And since every nature is ordered towards its own ultimate goal, it follows that man's goal is twofold: so that, just as he alone among all created beings shares in incorruptibility and corruptibility, so he alone among all created beings is ordered to two ultimate goals, one of them being his goal as a corruptible being, the other his goal as an incorruptible being.
 7 Ineffable providence has thus set before us two goals to aim at: i.e. happiness in this life, which consists in the exercise of our own powers and is figured in the earthly paradise; and happiness in the eternal life, which consists in the enjoyment of the vision of God (to which our own powers cannot raise us except with the help of
 8 God's light) and which is signified by the heavenly paradise. Now these two kinds of happiness must be reached by different means, as representing different ends. For we attain the first through the teachings of philosophy, provided that we follow them putting into practice the moral and intellectual virtues;⁶ whereas we attain the second through spiritual teachings which transcend human reason, provided that we follow them putting into practice the theological
 9 virtues, i.e. faith, hope and charity. These ends and the means to attain them have been shown to us on the one hand by human reason, which has been entirely revealed to us by the philosophers, and on the other by the Holy Spirit, who through the prophets and sacred writers, through Jesus Christ the son of God, coeternal with him, and through his disciples, has revealed to us the transcendent truth we cannot do without; yet human greed would cast these ends and means aside if men, like horses, prompted to wander by their animal natures, were not held in check 'with bit and bridle'⁷ on
 10 their journey.⁸ It is for this reason that man had need of two guides corresponding to his twofold goal: that is to say the supreme Pontiff, to lead mankind to eternal life in conformity with revealed truth, and the emperor, to guide mankind to temporal happiness in conformity with the teachings of philosophy. And since none can reach

⁵ *De anima* 2, 2.413b 26.

⁶ See *Mon.* II, vii, 4 (and n. 3).

⁷ Psalms 31, 9 (AV 32, 9).

⁸ i.e. in this life, the journey of this mortal life on earth.

this harbour (or few, and these few with great difficulty) unless the waves of seductive greed are calmed and the human race rests free in the tranquillity of peace, this is the goal which the protector of the world, who is called the Roman Prince, must strive with all his might to bring about: i.e. that life on this threshing-floor⁹ of mortals may be lived freely and in peace. And since the disposition of this
 12 world is a result of the disposition inherent in the circling of the heavens, in order that useful teachings concerning freedom and peace can be applied appropriately to times and places, it is necessary for provision for this protector to be made by Him who takes in at a glance the whole disposition of the heavens. For he alone is the one who preordained this disposition, making provision through it to bind all things in due order. If this is so, then God alone
 13 chooses, he alone confirms, since he has none above him. From this it can be further deduced that neither those who are now called 'electors',¹⁰ nor others who in whatever way have been so called, should be given this name; rather they should be thought of as 'proclaimers of divine providence'. Thus it happens that those
 14 granted the honour of making this proclamation may sometimes disagree among themselves, either because all of them or because some of them, their understanding clouded by the fog of greed, fail to perceive what God's dispensation is. Thus it is evident then that
 15 the authority of the temporal monarch flows down into him without any intermediary from the Fountainhead of universal authority; this Fountainhead, though one in the citadel of its own simplicity of nature,¹¹ flows into many streams from the abundance of his goodness.

And now it seems to me that I have reached the goal I set myself.
 16 For the truth has been revealed¹² concerning the first question we were inquiring into: whether the office of monarch was necessary to the well-being of the world; and to the second point of inquiry:

⁹ The threshing-floor or small patch of earth [*areola*] is the inhabitable land mass of the Northern hemisphere; the choice of word emphasizes the insignificance of human life seen in the perspective of the cosmic order.

¹⁰ i.e. the German princes who elected the Emperor.

¹¹ The phrase 'the citadel of its own simplicity of nature' [*in arce sue simplicitatis*], and the contrast between unity and multiplicity, echo Boethius, *De consolazione philosophiae* 4, prose 6 [*in suae simplicitatis arce*].

¹² Cf. *Mon.* I, 1, 5. We have come full circle, the truth announced in the opening chapter of the treatise has been revealed [*enucleata*].

whether the Roman people took on empire by right; and to the last point of inquiry: whether the authority of the monarch comes from
17 God directly or from someone else. But the truth concerning this last question should not be taken so literally as to mean that the Roman Prince is not in some sense subject to the Roman Pontiff, since this earthly happiness is in some sense ordered towards
18 immortal happiness. Let Caesar therefore show that reverence towards Peter which a firstborn son should show his father, so that, illumined by the light of paternal grace, he may the more effectively light up the world, over which he has been placed by Him alone who is ruler over all things spiritual and temporal.

Biographical notes

These notes are intended to provide the reader with a modicum of information about the authors and texts cited by Dante in the *Monarchy*. Titles marked with an asterisk (*) are referred to explicitly in the treatise. The list does not include the books of the Bible; these appear in a separate Table on pp. 99–101.

AQUINAS, Saint Thomas. Scholastic theologian and philosopher (1225/6–1274). Educated at Monte Cassino near his birthplace in Southern Italy, and then at Naples, he became a Dominican, and studied with Albert the Great in Cologne and Paris; he subsequently taught in both cities as well as in Rome, Bologna and Naples. Author of the *Summa theologiae*, the **Summa contra Gentiles* and *Commentaries* on many of Aristotle's texts, in which he sought to reconcile the teachings of the Greek philosopher with the revealed truths of the Christian religion. Canonized in 1323, two years after Dante's death.

ARISTOTLE, Greek philosopher (384 BC–322 BC). A pupil of Plato in Athens, on his return to Macedonia he became tutor to Alexander the Great; later he returned to Athens and founded the Peripatetic school of philosophy. Author of treatises on logic [**Categories*, **Prior Analytics*, **Sophistical Refutations*], natural science [**Physics*, **De anima*], rhetoric, **Metaphysics*, **Ethics*, and **Politics*: these works, translated and interpreted in later centuries – firstly into and in Arabic by Moslem scholars and subsequently (in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries) into and in Latin – formed the basis of philosophic and scientific learning in the late medieval Christian world.

The pseudo-Aristotelian **De causis* [or *Liber de causis*], which derives from the *Institutio* of Proclus and which was a key text for the transmission of neo-Platonic ideas to the Middle Ages, is cited by Dante with no indication of authorship.

AUGUSTINE, Saint. One of the great church fathers (354–430). Born in North Africa of a pagan father and a devout Christian mother; after a dissolute early life he was converted and baptized under the influence of St Ambrose in Milan (387); in the closing decades of his life he was bishop of Hippo in North Africa. Author, among other works, of the immensely influential *Confessions*, the **De civitate Dei*, and the **De doctrina christiana*.

AVERROES, Moslem philosopher, scholar, lawyer and doctor (1126–1198). Born in Cordoba, he died in Morocco. His most famous work was a commentary on Aristotle (whose writings he knew in Arabic translation); this was translated into Latin before 1250. His **Commentary on the De anima* in particular, with its unorthodox view of human intellect, was a controversial text for scholastic theologians.

BOETHIUS, Roman philosopher and statesman (c. AD 480–AD 524). His **De consolazione philosophiae*, written in prison in Pavia while he was awaiting execution for allegedly having plotted against King Theodoric, was a key text for Dante in both its philosophical content and its literary form, which combined meditative expository prose and sustained verse composition.

CICERO, Marcus Tullius. Roman writer, philosopher and statesman (106 BC–43 BC). Author, among other works, of the **De fine bonorum* [i.e. *De finibus*], **De inventione*, **De officiis*.

DANTE (see Principal events, pp. xxxix–xlii). The cross-reference to the **Divine Comedy* is a self-citation not untypical of this most self-conscious and self-referential of writers.

EUCLID, Greek mathematician (lived c. 300 BC). Author of the *Elements of Geometry*.

GALEN, physician (c. AD 130–c. AD 200). Born at Pergamum in Asia Minor, where he studied medicine, he later moved to Rome, where he became very famous, and included emperors among his patients;

after Hippocrates he was the most celebrated physician of antiquity. A prolific writer on medical subjects, his texts were authoritative throughout the Middle Ages and until the sixteenth century.

JUVENAL, Roman satirist (c. AD 60–c. AD 140). Author of sixteen Satires [**VIII*], which Dante seems to have known and to quote only at second hand.

LIVY, Roman historian (59 BC–AD 17). Born at Padua, where he also died, he lived most of his life at Rome. Author of a lengthy history of Rome from the foundation of the city to 9 BC, **Ab urbe condita*; only 35 of the original 142 books are now extant, but the work was frequently abridged in the Middle Ages, and these abridged versions (which may be Dante's source) cover most of the missing material.

LUCAN, Roman poet (AD 39–AD 65). A nephew of Seneca, the Stoic philosopher and tragedian; born in Spain, he was brought up in Rome, where he took his own life in his twenty-sixth year on the order of Nero, against whom he had conspired. Author of the *De bello civili*, also known as the **Pharsalia*, an epic poem on the civil war recounting the struggles between Caesar and Pompey.

MASTER OF THE SENTENCES (see Peter Lombard).

MASTER OF THE SIX PRINCIPLES. The author of a **Commentary on Aristotle's Categories*.

OROSIUS, Spanish historian and priest. A contemporary and friend of Saint Augustine, on whose suggestion he wrote his **Seven Books of History against the Pagans*, which trace the history of the world from a Christian viewpoint, in order to show that there has been no decline in civilization since the coming of Christianity. This work served later generations as a source book not only for ancient history but also for geography.

OVID, Roman poet (43 BC–AD 17). Author, among other works, of the **Metamorphoses*, Dante's chief source for classical mythology.

PETER LOMBARD (c. 1095–1160). Also known as the Master of the Sentences from the title of his work **Libri quattuor sententiarum*, a collection of 'sentences' or opinions of the Church Fathers, which became enormously popular and was used as a theological text-book.

PYTHAGORAS, Greek philosopher (c. 582 BC–c. 506 BC). His thought centred on the idea of number and the importance of the numerical and mathematical relations between things. No writings of his are extant; Dante's knowledge of his doctrines came principally from Aristotle.

SENECA, Roman philosopher and dramatist (4 BC–AD 65). Dante, like his contemporaries, mistakenly believed him to be the author of the **De quattuor virtutibus*, a work now attributed to St Martin of Dumio, who died in 580.

THOMAS (see Aquinas).

VEGETIUS, Roman writer. Author of the **De re militari*, a study of the art of warfare and military strategy.

VIRGIL, Roman poet (70 BC–19 BC). Author of the **Eclogues*, the *Georgics*, and the **Aeneid*, an epic poem which traces the legendary pre-history of the Roman people from the fall of Troy to the victory of Aeneas over Turnus on the spot which is destined to become the city of Rome and the seat of the Roman empire.

Table of biblical citations*

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8, 6 (AV 8, 5) – I, iv, 2
10, 8 (AV 11, 7) – II, ix, 1
[31, 9 (AV 32, 9) – III, xvi, 9]
[32, 19 (AV 33, 19) – III, xiii, 5]
49, 16 (AV 50, 16) – I, xiii, 5

* References in square brackets indicate a clear biblical allusion (e.g. to the buried talent, or the seamless garment, or the many-headed beast), to whose biblical source Dante does not explicitly draw attention.

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71, 1 (AV 72, 1) - I, xiii, 7
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* There are of course many direct echoes of Aristotle's thinking central to Dante's argument whose Aristotelian derivation is not explicitly acknowledged as such in the text (e.g. the notion of the good life, the three forms of just and perverted government, the conception of justice as a virtue which operates in relation to other people, and so on).

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